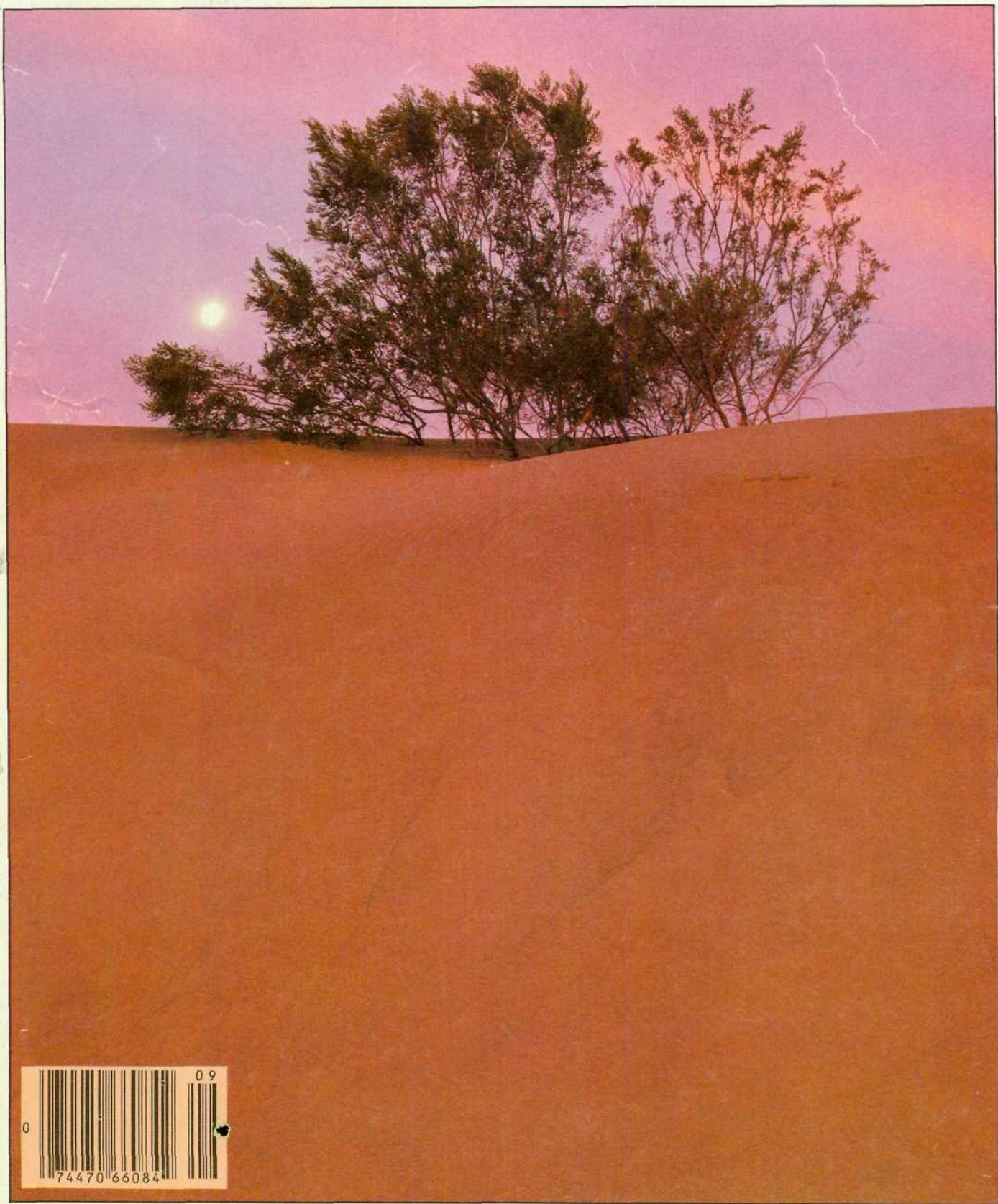
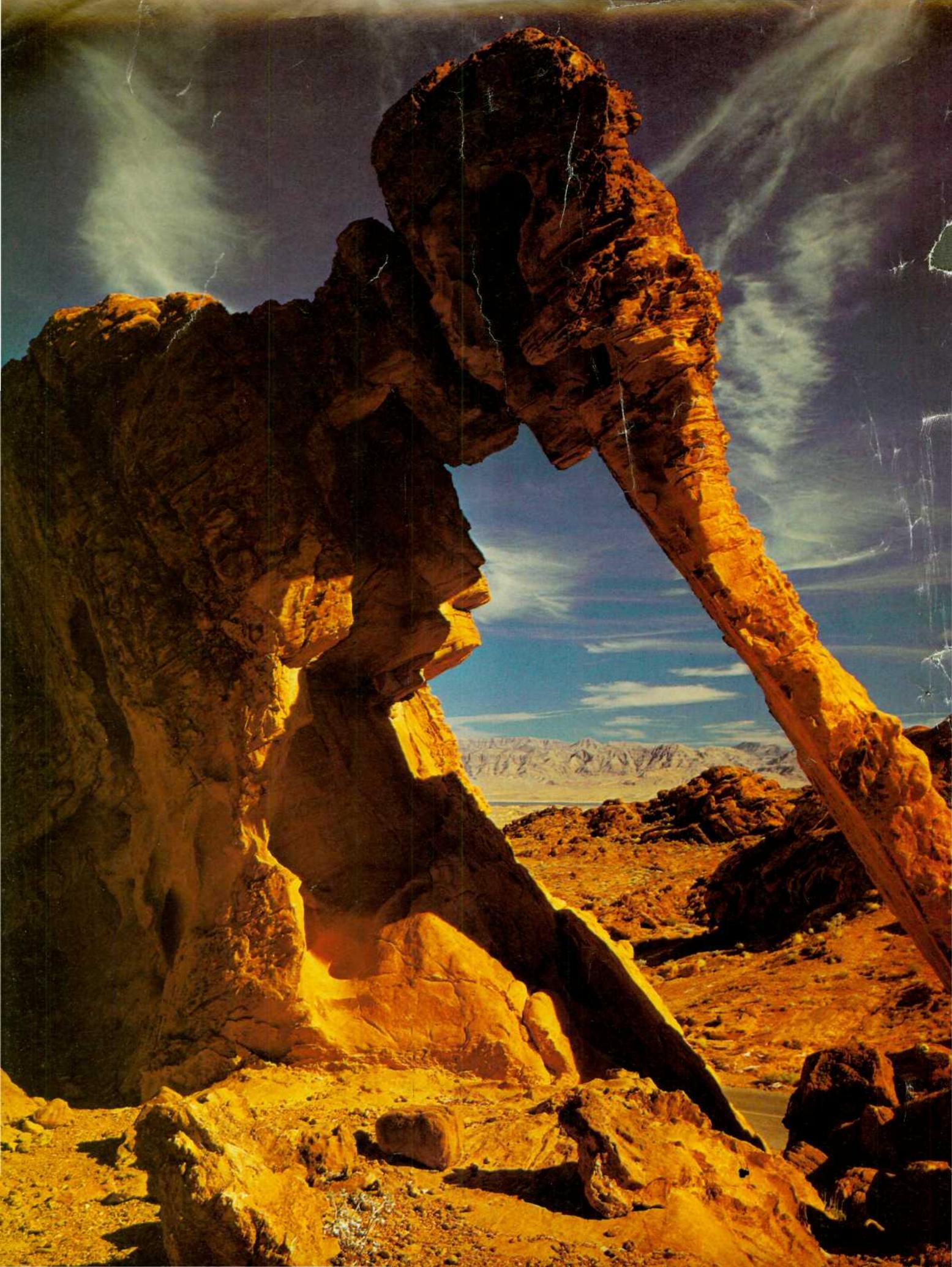


September, 1981  
\$2.00

# Desert





# Desert

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHWEST

**Nevada's Desert Owl**

by William Tarrant

Join us in a light-hearted look at the inner Las Vegas.

page 12

**Where to Go and What to See In and Around Las Vegas**by Diane Hlava and *Desert* magazine staff

Las Vegas is more than gambling casinos. This article will guide you to less frequented, but just as entertaining areas.

page 14

**A Camera's Eye on the Desert Sky**

by Thomas Hewitt

Come and look at some beautiful and unusual desert photos and at the same time learn the secrets of capturing the elegance of the desert night sky.

page 24

**Into the Grand Canyon with a Mop**

by Virginia Greene

Take a houseboat out on Lake Mead with Greene and her five fellow adventurers.

page 26

**Impressions of a Scenic Photographer**

by Jeff Gnass

with Frances G. Smith

Jeff Gnass has been featured on the cover and pages of *Desert* magazine many times. He now shares with us the reasons behind his chosen art form.

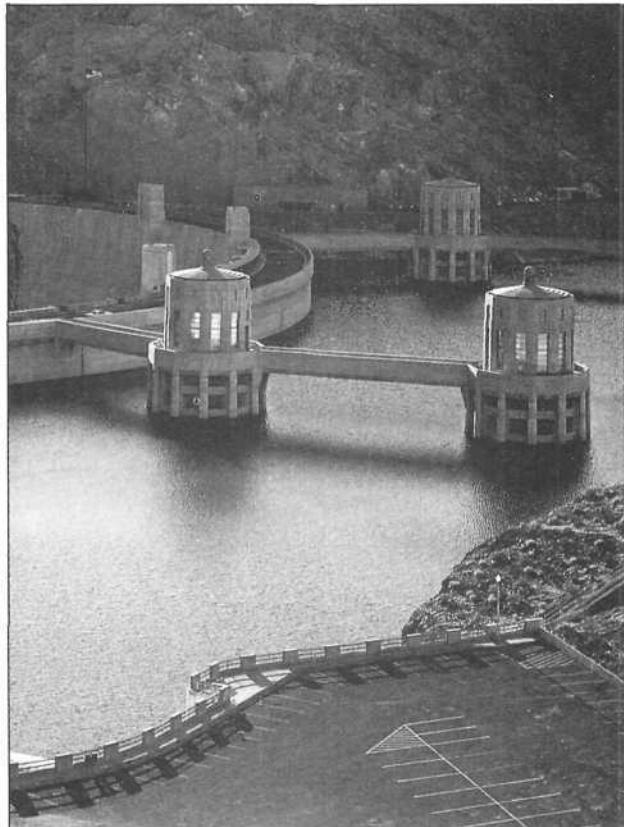
page 30

**Dusting Tracks with Amtrak's *Desert Wind***

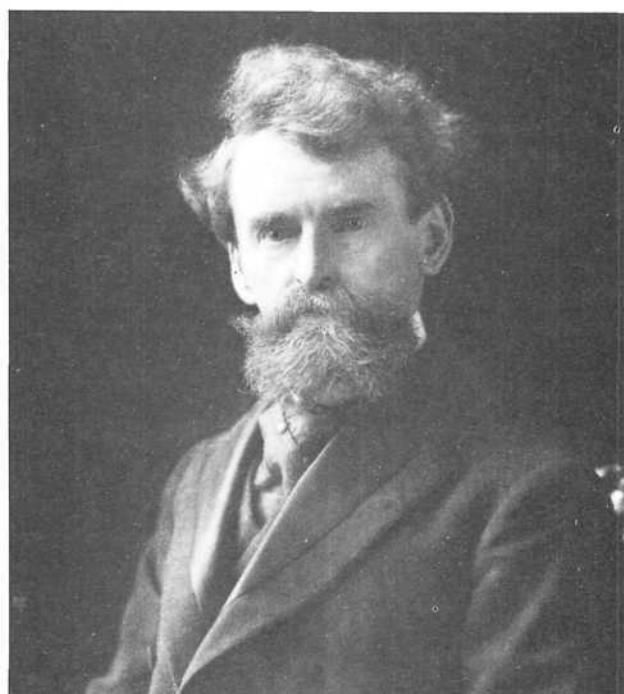
by Gordon Smith

A trip by rail from Los Angeles to Las Vegas can be a lively affair.

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page 14



page 54

**From Ashes to Wildflowers**

by Wayne P. Armstrong

Fire does not always mean death and destruction. Armstrong shows us how renewal can remarkably follow devastation.

page 40

**High Country Railroading**

by Diane Hlava

Now that we've seen the modern rail version of Amtrak, Hlava takes us back to the 1880s. This scenic trip is a must for those who love vintage railroading.

page 45

**Lady Las Vegas**

by Virginia Greene

Las Vegas wasn't always the glittering lady she is now.

page 50

**Williams Andrew Clark**

by Roberta Donovan

In the history of Las Vegas, one man was responsible for its primary surge of growth.

page 54

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**Cover:**

*Dawn creeps over the dunes with a creosote bush as witness. We revel in the aesthetic beauty captured by Jeff Gnass in Death Valley National Monument, California.*

**Inside Cover:**

*Elephant Rock, a sandstone span in the Valley of Fire State Park in Southern Nevada. Photograph by David Muench.*

# EDITORIAL

ED SEYKOTA



I WOULD LIKE to ask you to pay more attention to this issue of *Desert* magazine. Look just a bit closer at what the writers have to say and how they say it. I have specifically requested that they take more license with their communication and expression. Our job is to serve you, and I would like to know if you think we are living up to that responsibility.

I think we are.

Virginia Greene has let more of her heart run free in her writing this time. Gordon Smith told his story of a trip on Amtrak's *Desert Wind*, with an absence of judgemental comment that speaks well for journalistic integrity. These people and others care more about the reader and communication of the subject matter than they do about "sound-  
ing like a writer." I appreciate that

and think you are better served this way.

In this issue, you will notice the heart of the stoic desert rat loosening up a bit and becoming more expressive, more communicative. There is more humor, more personal involvement. The text accompanying the photography of Jeff Gnass and Thomas Hewitt tells you more about the people behind the lens, the feelings and thoughts they have, than you would otherwise get from a straight presentation of photos. I would like to thank them for their willingness to communicate. That is not always an easy thing for an artist to do verbally.

*Desert* magazine is older than anyone on this staff. We are young and we are committed—and in our combined intention toward excellence we are powerful. I hope you will join and support us. With unshackled writers and a land as grand and diverse as this, we cannot go wrong.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen Simpson".

# Desert

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHWEST

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# SHIFTING SANDS

---

by Ed Seykota

## On Laughter

Laughter is the spark of the soul. It gives us delight in our days. Here are some thoughts about laughter.

---

Laughing is the sensation of feeling good all over, and showing it principally in one spot.

*Bob Hope*

A good laugh is sunshine in a house.

*Thackeray*

Though laughter is looked upon by philosophers as the property of reason, the excess of it has always been considered the mark of folly.

*Addison*

Laughter is a most healthful exertion; it is one of the greatest helps to digestion with which I am acquainted; and the custom prevalent among our forefathers, of exciting it at table by jesters and buffoons, was founded on true medical principles.

*Hufeland*

Excellent authority tells us that the right laughter is medicine to weary bones.

*Carl Sandburg*

Men show their character in nothing more clearly than by what they think laughable.

*Goethe*

No one is more profoundly sad than he who laughs too much.

*Richter*

You grow up the day you have the first real laugh—at yourself.

*Ethel Barrymore*

People who believe in little laugh at little.

*Leonard Feeney*

There is almost nothing I won't laugh at.

*Stephen Simpson*

He laughs best who laughs last.

*English Proverb*

I like the laughter that opens the lips and the heart, that shows at the same time pearls and the soul.

*Victor Marie Hugo*

A laugh is worth a hundred groans in any market.

*Charles Lamb*

The loud laugh, that speaks the vacant mind.

*Oliver Goldsmith*

Laughter makes your hair grow.

*Diana Cooper*

Conversation never sits easier than when we now and then discharge ourselves in a symphony of laughter; which may not improperly be called the chorus of conversation.

*Sir Richard Steele*

# LETTERS

## Does Anyone Care?

I could not resist writing any longer.

We want you to know there are many of us old-time desert people who are sick or very unhappy about what you and your group have done to *Desert*.

You have made it look like more than 1,000 other newsstand magazines—even a product evaluation on airplanes (brother!).

Many of us, for years, have looked forward to the arrival of *Desert*. Now this pleasure is gone, too. Keep sending it, or don't. We don't care. Oh, what's the use!

Floyd J. Peters  
North Shore, California

I know what you mean, Floyd. Or maybe I don't know what you mean. Write and tell me—or don't write and tell me. I care, or maybe I don't care. Oh, what's the use?

Playfully,  
Editor

## Rattlesnake Remedy

We are interested in the letters on getting rid of rattlesnakes, but no one mentioned the easiest way. When out on a prospect near Globe, Arizona, our prospector and his wife stayed in a shack with a wooden floor. The rattlesnakes under this floor were so loud that these people were kept awake. They got two energetic full-grown cats, and in a month—no snakes!! Just give the cats water, but no food. If there are rodents around, they'll disappear too.

Like your new format! Especially liked the *Desert Ship* [Nov. 1980] article.

E. Foster Scholey  
Prescott, Arizona 86301

## Desert Devotees

I was delighted to learn of your plan to feature the desert areas surrounding Las Vegas in your upcoming September issue. As mayor of the "Entertainment Capital of the World," I have a great love for the desert and enjoy more than 200 cacti I've collected for a garden at my home. The name of your magazine suggests my favorite part of the country: the great deserts of the Southwest!

I enjoyed the article in your July [1981] issue on the Santa Catalina Mountains, as

well as Steuer's magnificent photography (I'm an amateur photographer, too!).

William H. Briare, Mayor  
Las Vegas, Nevada

Today, I read this month's issue of *Desert* and wish to tell you that I enjoyed it very much. I was glad to see Choral Pepper and Karen Sausman's names as Contributing Editors. Thank you for my copies.

It does not seem possible that my husband (Randall Henderson) is no longer alive. I have been in Palm Desert for several months, and can hardly believe that it has grown so much.

I wish that I could go on a desert trip or so, but have given up driving. I shall probably be leaving in a few weeks to go to South Africa to see old friends.

May good fortune be with you and the dear magazine.

Cyria Henderson  
Palm Desert, California

## Sagebrush Rebellion Strikes Again

In your editorial in the January [1981] issue of *Desert*, you imply that all western people are Sagebrush Rebels. The truth is, most environmentalists, sportsmen, hunters, fishermen, prospectors, small

## The Governor Speaks Out

I have enjoyed reading *Desert* magazine for many years. Your recent editorials have added a very positive note to the vital land issue in the West, which has become known as the Sagebrush Rebellion. Your support of state control of unappropriated lands is encouraging. Also, your continual urging of the Federal Government to use common sense in regulating activities on public lands is most timely.

We in Nevada are laying the necessary groundwork to guarantee proper management of public lands, should we be successful in our Sagebrush Rebellion. A proposal to the Nevada Constitution, which requires approval by two successive sessions of the legislature and a vote by the general public, would provide three important guarantees:

Retention of most public lands in public ownership;

Retention of permanent public access over any public lands that would be sold; and

Management of public lands in a balanced, multiple-use manner for the benefit of the greatest number of citizens possible.

One of the greatest challenges we face is the proposed deployment of the massive MX missile system. MX:

Those letters promise an economic bonanza to some Nevadans, destruction of precious resources to others. To most of us, they represent a mixture of benefits and liabilities. I would prefer to have it deployed elsewhere, but, putting personal opinion aside, I have launched a massive statewide effort to assess the impact of the proposal, so that we will be prepared should a portion of the system be deployed in Nevada.

In the event of construction, my Administration is committed to minimizing the negative impacts of the system to our citizens, resources and environment. I urge your readers to demand through their elected representatives in Congress that if the MX must be deployed in Nevada and Utah, a comprehensive, detailed and accurate environmental assessment be prepared by the Federal Government with all negative impacts completely overcome whenever possible.

The articles in *Desert* magazine continue to be enlightening and entertaining, your photographs outstanding, your editorial positions right on target. Keep up the good work on your fine magazine.

Robert List, Governor  
Carson City, Nevada

# WATER WONDERLANDS Year-Around Get-A-Ways

miners and rockhounds oppose it. We do not want a situation like the one that exists in Texas, where three whole counties are owned and closed to the public by the King Ranch. In Arizona, on the "trust lands," there are more than 9,000,000 acres undergoing intensive exploitation for the sole purpose of revenue.

Others who oppose it are ex-Gov. Mike O'Callaghan of Nevada, Gov. Lamm of Colorado and Gov. Babbitt of Arizona. A Sagebrush Rebellion bill, ABJ16, failed to pass in the California Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The voters of the state of Washington voted down their Sagebrush Rebellion two to one.

I have roamed the public lands in eight western states for 33 years and have not seen a Bureau of Land Management "no trespassing" sign.

Larry Bertles  
Fallon, Nevada

## Good Intentions

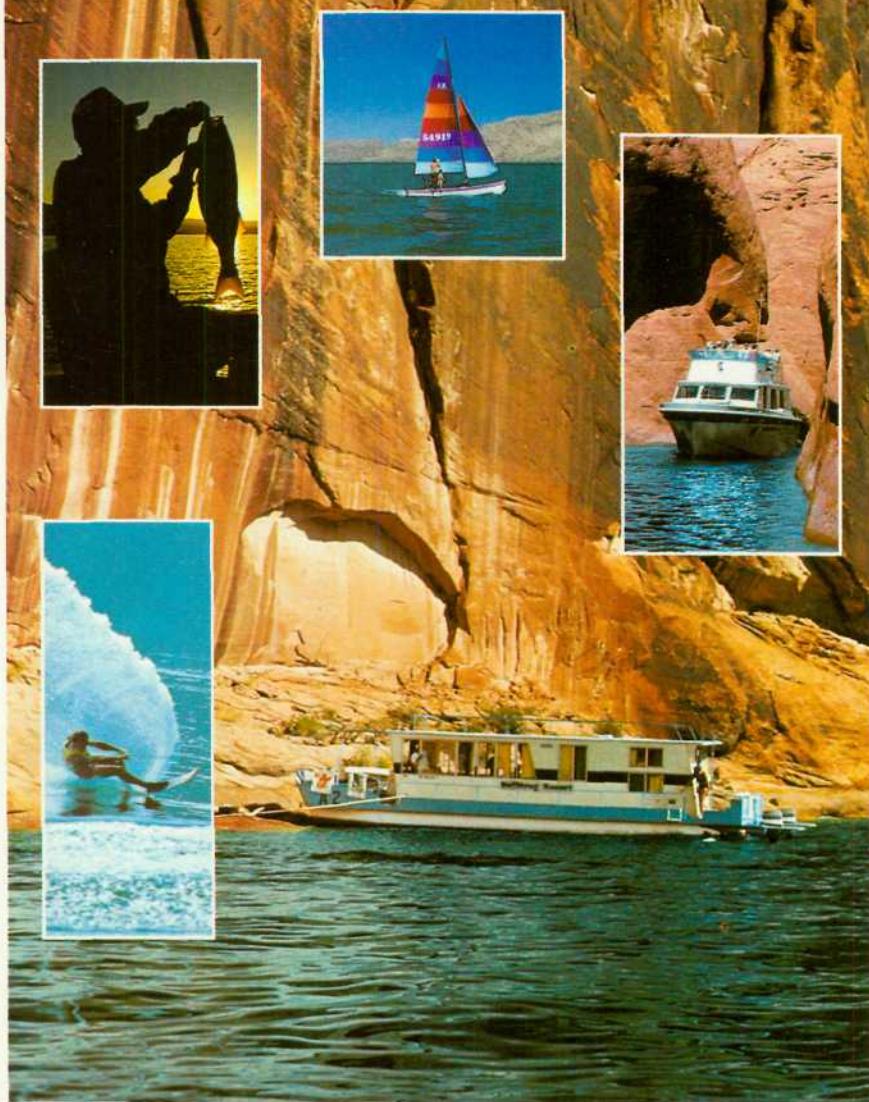
I read with interest the article *Reprise for Brighty* in the May [1981] issue. It is unfortunate that ignorance and sentimentality have prevailed over the knowledge and experience of wildlife biologists in persuading Congress to pass laws that make the control of the populations of wild horses and burros, not only in parks but in public lands, extremely difficult if not impossible.

The entirely predictable result is now taking place:

1. Uncontrolled population growth.
2. Crowding-out of native animal species.
3. Over-grazing, with destruction of plant cover, erosion of the land and long-term if not permanent reduction of the carrying capacity of the land.
4. Reduction of the population by starvation and disease.

One wonders if Cleveland Amory and the other groups will be willing to take the difficult and expensive action necessary to prevent one more illustration of the adage, "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions."

John R. Ledbetter, M.D.  
Rogersville, Alabama



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# THE LIVING DESERT

by Susan Durr Nix

## The Peerless Pronghorn

Meet the swiftest, keenest-eyed land animal in the world.

**M**EET THE "antelope" that played with the deer and roamed with the buffalo in vast herds over the rangelands of America less than 150 years ago. Meet a living fossil, the last of a once-numerous and strictly American family of hoofed and horned cud-chewers whose heyday passed about 10 million years ago. Meet the swiftest, keenest-eyed land animal in the world. Meet the pronghorn.

How is it you've missed this superlative creature until now? Unless he's an avid hunter or lives near the Sheldon National Antelope Refuge in Nevada, a Southwesterner nowadays is unlikely ever to have heard of pronghorns, let alone seen them. They've gone the way of the buffalo, snatched from the jaws of extinction just in time. An estimated 30-60 million ranged west of the Mississippi from Canada to Mexico in 1824; a mere 70 years later, fewer than 20,000 were left. Pronghorns now survive only in refuges and isolated areas, mostly in the less populated Northwest.

*Antelope* is as inaccurate a name for a pronghorn as *buffalo* is for a bison. Our forefathers applied the name to these petite, graceful animals whom we now know to be more closely related to sheep than to anything else. *Antilocapridae* (goat-antelope) is the family name, a token of the taxonomic difficulties the pronghorn posed until the fossil record cleared up the puzzle of its confused characteristics.

Part of the confusion stems from the distinction between horns and antlers. Solid bone antlers, such as a deer's, are shed and regrown annually. A network of blood vessels called velvet covers them as they grow and etches well defined grooves in the bone, clearly visible when the velvet dries up and falls off. Each succeeding set

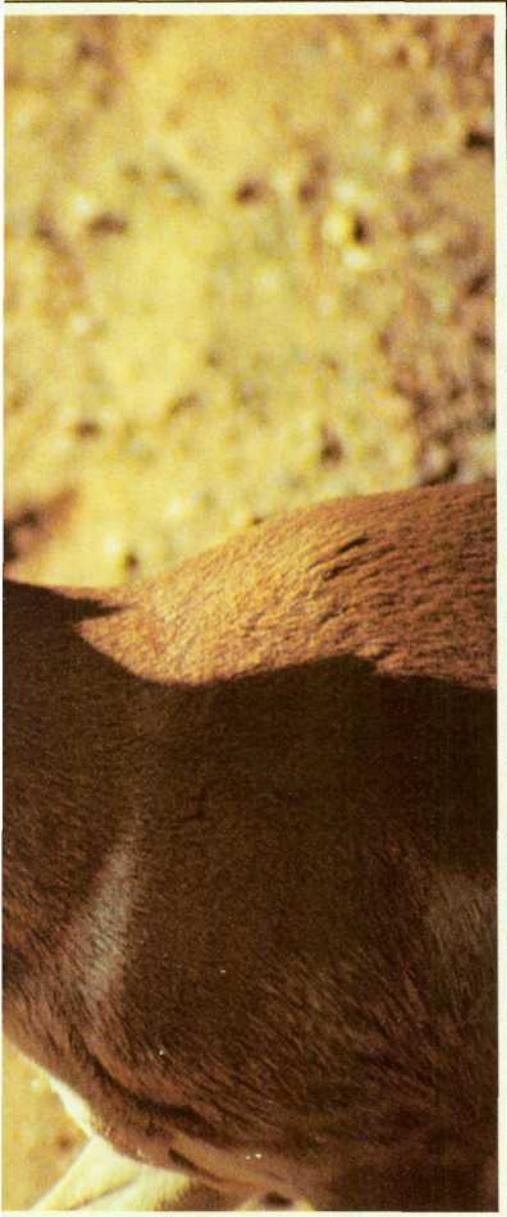


of antlers is more elaborately branched than the last until the animal reaches its prime; thereafter they decline annually. The oldest buck, therefore, may have antlers no larger than a yearling's.

The oldest bighorn ram, on the other hand, has the herd's most magnificent set of horns. As fixtures, horns grow continuously. They are hollow, nourished by internal blood vessels and supported by a living, bony core. Unlike antlers, they do not fork and branch.

The horned are quite distinct from the

**There must be few discouragements in the life of a coyote equal to the pursuit of a rump-flashing pronghorn.**



DENVER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

*The peerless pronghorn, whose survival has depended on his superb adaptations.*

antlered, with the single exception of the pronghorn. As his name suggests, his horns are branched. About two-thirds of the way up the black flattened sheaths, a prong juts forward like the hilt of a knife.

Technically a bovid—an even-toed, hooved and horned grazing mammal—a pronghorn is unique inside and out. He is the only bovid with a gall bladder and the only one without dew claws; the two small

extra hooves on the back of the leg above the true hoof. He is the only two-toed animal on the continent.

Why he alone of all his family survived into modern times may have to do with his superb adaptation to life on the deserts and plains of the West. In these open habitats, shared by predacious bobcats and coyotes, vigilance and speed are essential bovid defenses. The pronghorn's enormous protruding eyes and sharp sense of hearing and smell are radar-accurate. Certainly no other mammal (and possibly no other living thing, except some of the birds of prey) has such acute vision, said to be eight times better than ours.

It's almost impossible to take a pronghorn by surprise. Once alert to danger, he can rely on his powerful legs, prodigious lungs and heart, outsized feet padded against rocky terrain, friction-free ground-skimming gait and remarkable stamina to make his escape. With an average maximum speed of 50-60 miles per hour and a sustained speed of 40-50 miles per hour, he is without a doubt the world's fastest long distance runner. His is not the frantic flight of the victim, but the arrogant, calculated retreat of the champion who has the advantage and means to keep it. Unlike a deer, a pronghorn never runs for cover. He stays in the open where his sight and speed have the greatest scope and where his disruptive coloration makes him nearly invisible at a distance. Until the introduction of the rifle, no predator was equal to a healthy pronghorn.

The advantage of the individual is multiplied in the herd. Pronghorns typically rest in a circular conformation, a look-out in every direction. A slight movement or disturbance half a mile or more away immediately prompts a "stotting" or "pronking" alarm to the rest of the herd. Tail raised, the lookout takes off, making himself more conspicuous by flashing his bright white rump patch. In full sunlight and open terrain, the flash may be visible for several miles, instantly alerting the entire area. A chain reaction sets the whole herd in motion.

Rump-flashing is accomplished by

special muscles that literally make his hair stand on end. The long, erect side filaments turn outward a full four inches, effectively doubling the size of the patch. (The antelope jackrabbit, who shares this ability, gets his name from the pronghorn "antelope.") In a group situation, this display is either altruistic or selfish, depending on your viewpoint. On the one hand it warns and preserves the herd, on the other it screens and safeguards the individual. For a lone pronghorn it seems clearly to be a pursuit invitation, a way to take the initiative in the chase so he is not forced to keep track of a predator's movements. There must be few discouragements in the life of a coyote to equal the pursuit of a rump-flashing pronghorn. How frustrating when its prey turns around in mid stride and, patch hidden, seems to vanish!

Pronghorns can control their other body hair in the same way, raising and lowering it to regulate the circulation of the air close to their skin. This accounts for their indifference to both sub-zero and scorching temperatures. A tolerance for a wide variety of foods, including cacti and toxic plants, and an ability, if need be, to live without free water opened an even wider variety of habitats to the adaptable pronghorn. He was quick to exploit them all.

Ultimately, his remarkable success was his undoing. Sixty million pronghorns were an irresistible target, particularly as bison began to disappear from the plains. Some were killed for food, but most for the challenge. Even now, pronghorns are second only to deer in hunter popularity. □

*Susan Durr Nix is Development Coordinator at the Living Desert Reserve, a 1,000-acre desert interpretation and conservation facility in Palm Desert, California. She shares her enthusiasm for the natural world not only in articles and publications, but in educational programs for visitors to the reserve.*



# CHUCK WAGON COOKIN'

by Stella Hughes

## The last word on eggs

**T**HERE ARE many legends about eggs. The Chinese believed the Supreme Being dropped an egg from the sky and Man hatched from it. The early Phoenicians spread the rumor that an egg split in half, forming heaven and earth. The Finns believed a wild duck laid an egg that broke to form the earth. The Egyptians had several legends involving an egg in the earth's formation. Even American Indians held beliefs of the Great Spirit having been hatched from an egg.

I asked an old Apache friend if he'd ever been told of the earth being formed from an egg.

"Naw," he answered slowly, "I don't tink so. Apaches like eggs an' I tink they eat before da egg hatch an' eart." He roared with laughter.

The old Indian may have had a point. At any rate, he was right about the Apaches liking eggs. My husband used to buy eggs by the case for round-ups on the San Carlos Reservation. This was 33 dozen at a whack. We had one cook who wasn't too energetic, or he was simply uninspired; the lunch he'd make up for the cowboys consisted mostly of boiled eggs. This lunch was delivered to the branding grounds on a pack mule led by the flunkie. The pack mule was snow white and called Rosie. Well, after several weeks of boiled eggs for lunch, the cowboys' enthusiasm for eggs palled somewhat. When they'd sight the flunkie leading Rosie they'd growl, "Here comes Eggs." Soon the little mule's name was changed. When she died many years later, she was still known as Eggs.

I'd hate to think of life with no eggs.



Terry Williams, Desert magazine's Circulation Director.

Consider for a moment. No eggs, over easy, with ham for breakfast; no golden scrambled ones, with green chiles for a quick supper, or egg salad sandwiches in the lunch pail. We'd surely miss them. It's

almost impossible to make a cake without eggs, even when using box mixes. I know we'd miss the feather-light angel food cakes, floating-island custards and filling for pies, eclairs, cream puffs and me-

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ringues.

Cookbooks have page after page of recipes for main dishes using eggs. They show omelets of every description, combined with certain vegetables that are regional favorites. The southwesterner likes omelets warm with chiles, red or green, fresh or canned. Variations call for cheese, any kind, shredded and sprinkled over the omelet before folding. Crumpled crisp bacon, diced tomato, minced onion and green pepper, lightly browned and sprinkled over the omelet before folding, is sometimes called Spanish or Denver omelet.

With all the hundreds of ways to use eggs, it's hard to believe the day would come when you have more eggs than you know what to do with. Well, how about Monday after Easter? Even a dozen surplus hard-boiled eggs, their garish colors a shock each time you open the refrigerator door, can tax your ingenuity. What do you do with them? Here's a list:

Chopped and sprinkled on a fresh green salad

Grated and sprinkled over any casserole

Chopped and added to white sauce, with diced ham or crumpled crisp bacon, and served on toast

Egg salad sandwiches

Pickled eggs

Deviled eggs

Deviled eggs are an old stand-by, and recipes can be found in most cookbooks. They usually say to shell eggs, cut lengthwise, mash yolks well, moisten with a little melted butter, or salad dressing, sour cream or mayonnaise and add one or a combination of savory ingredients for zesty flavor. For example:

Snipped chives or scallions

Grated cheese

Tuna or crabmeat, finely chopped

Chopped pickle (dill, sweet, mustard,

etc.)

Chopped olive (ripe or green)

Deviled ham

Mashed avocado with a dash of lemon

Anchovy paste with finely minced onion

Liver sausage

Pickling eggs can be fun, and they're great with cold beer, or added to a picnic basket, or halved and placed on a dieter's skimpy, green salad.

Make a solution of vinegar and water, add dry mustard to taste, salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Let cool, then pour brine into pickling jar and add the shelled eggs. Cover and refrigerate several days before using.

Another method is to use sweet pickle juice, add some vinegar if you like, dash of salt, several slices of white onion, bring to a boil; set aside to cool. Shell hard-boiled eggs, add to solution and store in a covered jar. In 24 hours, they will be ready to eat.

My favorite way to prepare pickled eggs is to drain the juice from one can of beets, add vinegar, some sugar, salt and pepper, bring liquid to a boil and let cool before adding shelled eggs. Slices of white onion don't hurt pickled eggs, ever.

Another way is to use brine saved from a jar of Polish sausage. Bring brine to the boiling point, let cool, then add shelled eggs. Store in the jar the sausages came in. This is a very good egg keeper.

I've been told of a unique method of preparing eggs, as brought back by visitors to the Philippine Islands. They say the natives take fresh eggs, bury them in the sand and leave them for 100 days. Then they are dug up and eaten. I understand this is called *balut*. I've failed to find a comparable method for preserving eggs in any cookbook; old or new. I'd welcome information from readers that know more on this method. They might keep forever, depending on your taste. □

---

**By Bill Tarrant**

---

'M BOONDOCK, my wife's neon: an unlikely pair. In grumbling voice, I quote the lament of Wordsworth, "The world is too much with us . . . getting and spending we lay waste our powers." I throw my backpack over my shoulder, call my dogs together and disappear into the hills.

My wife Dee? She glides in a cab through Phoenix, Los Angeles or Las Vegas, her face a radiant glow. She says, in a child's wondrous way, "Oh . . . it just makes me feel like gold."

We love each other, this writer of remote places and this gal who fastidiously follows fashion and owns a status boutique. We deal in grudgeless trade-offs to make our marriage work. She sits in the tree stand beside the deer trail. I hand her clothes and tacks and monofilament to put in the boutique window. She baits the hook, I sit through the salesman's showing. She tosses decoys into the marsh, I wait patiently in the boutique late at night while she tallies the day's receipts. Then we leave our work behind and take a vacation.

This year, she wants Lake Tahoe. Next year, it's San Diego. The year after that, it will be Catalina. For me, it's been too long

since I fished the Madison in Montana. We'll go there, I thought, or hike the Pecos Wilderness Area outside Taos, New Mexico, or float the Grand Canyon.

Those were not to be. One of Dee's girlfriends, harried with the rush of the season, blowing wisps of hair from cheeks damp with perspiration, suggested, "Why don't we go to Las Vegas?" Dee started packing.

So here we are. I don't know what to call

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**You can be yourself in Las Vegas. It's not the place of fear and loathing one writer said it was.**

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the place. If New York is the Big Apple, this would have to be the Big Parrot or the Big Peacock. What else is so bright and noisy? No, neither of those would be right. Las Vegas should be called the Desert Owl. What else stays up all night, has eyes big enough to see it all and can turn its head completely around to be sure nothing's gaining on it?

The strange thing I have to confess is that everyone can have fun in Las Vegas. That's saying a lot, coming from a guy who prefers one-course skillet cooking,

travels in nothing faster than his Vibram-soled boots and usually sees nothing brighter at night than the stars or a Coleman lantern.

Now, they've got the shows, the gambling and the people to watch. You can walk from the Aladdin to the Sahara in the afternoon and enjoy a desert trek. There's all the gossip you pick up and carry on while you're there, leaving it to a newcomer who'll leave it to yet another: where the jackpots are really paying off, why Wayne Newton really bought the Aladdin, when Frank Sinatra will take over, etc.

Still, that's not the Desert Owl to my way of thinking.

No, the primary attraction in the Desert Owl is Circus-Circus—not the casino, but upstairs, where they have all the kiddie games. Dee's and my favorite is the horse race. Eighteen brightly colored horses, festooned with jockeys in riotous silks, make their way across a green field, progressing according to how well the player throws a red ball into a series of holes protected by some metal bumps.

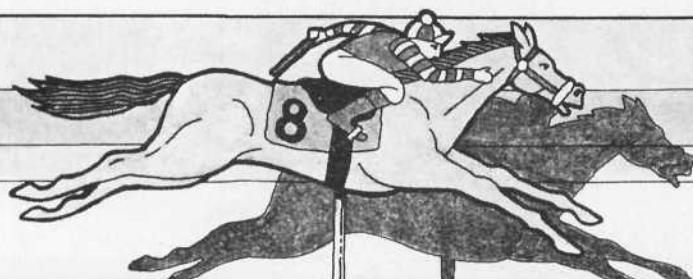
That's where Dee comes alive. She's found her game, if not her calling. "They're off," announces the concessionaire. The balls start banging and the horses start edging forward, or taking off in

# **NEVADA'S DESERT OWL**

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**A true desert rat ruminates on the unexpected pleasures in the sparkle of Vegas.**

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great bounds when someone drops the ball in the 3-hole. You can't look at the other players. You can't take your eye off that ball. You have to ask an onlooker, "Where am I?" It doesn't matter where you are. If you're behind you throw harder, and if you're ahead you throw harder. The winning horse touches his nose to the far wall, a bell rings and everyone collapses and digs for more coins.

Then they all look at Dee. Some smile, others frown—some are downright indignant. She's won a stuffed monkey, a plastic bank resembling an old lady in a rocking chair, a floppy beagle with long brown ears and the concessionaire is bringing her a prone lion. I'm telling Dee, "Let's get out of here;" not because I don't feel like standing before an enraged mob, but there are other games to play.

There are balloons mounted atop pipes that connect to the open mouths of clowns painted on metal. I shoot a steady stream of water into the clown's mouth and my balloon rises, distending until it turns pale—BAM! Someone else's goes and water sprays everywhere. I look at my balloon, coming down now, and it's all wrinkled. It was bigger than any of the others, and I decide it's made of sharkskin.

There are rifles. I can shoot a red star with an automatic rifle and if I leave not a

bit of red, I win a giant lion. There are electronic rifles that chase blips on a screen. Light-ray rifles let me potshoot at targets beside animated characters that do silly things when their target is lit—bells ring, lights flash and the animal may do a jig.

I guess all of this is not very sophisticated. No shades of Monte Carlo, the limousine stopping at the door, the doorman in long coat with gold epaulets

## The singular attraction in the Desert Owl is not the casino, but all the kiddie games upstairs at Circus-Circus.

letting the lady in long white gown alight and walk liquidly into fabled casinos. There is no escort, tapping a cigarette on his gold Dunhill and adjusting his black tie, who blows smoke beneath his Clark Gable moustache.

Each of us takes the place with us. Whatever awaits us is toted there to begin with. We are what we are, and we seek proof that we can be that—wherever we are.

You can be yourself in Las Vegas. It's not the place of fear and loathing one writer said it was. It can be kind, graceful, even warm. Sure it can be kinky, but it can be correct and even uplifting.

It's a circus for big kids, with sirens and bells and elephants on the midway, girls in spangled tights hanging by their teeth from the rafters and big bass drums and popcorn carts, cotton candy and "One ring around the milk bottle wins this giant camel."

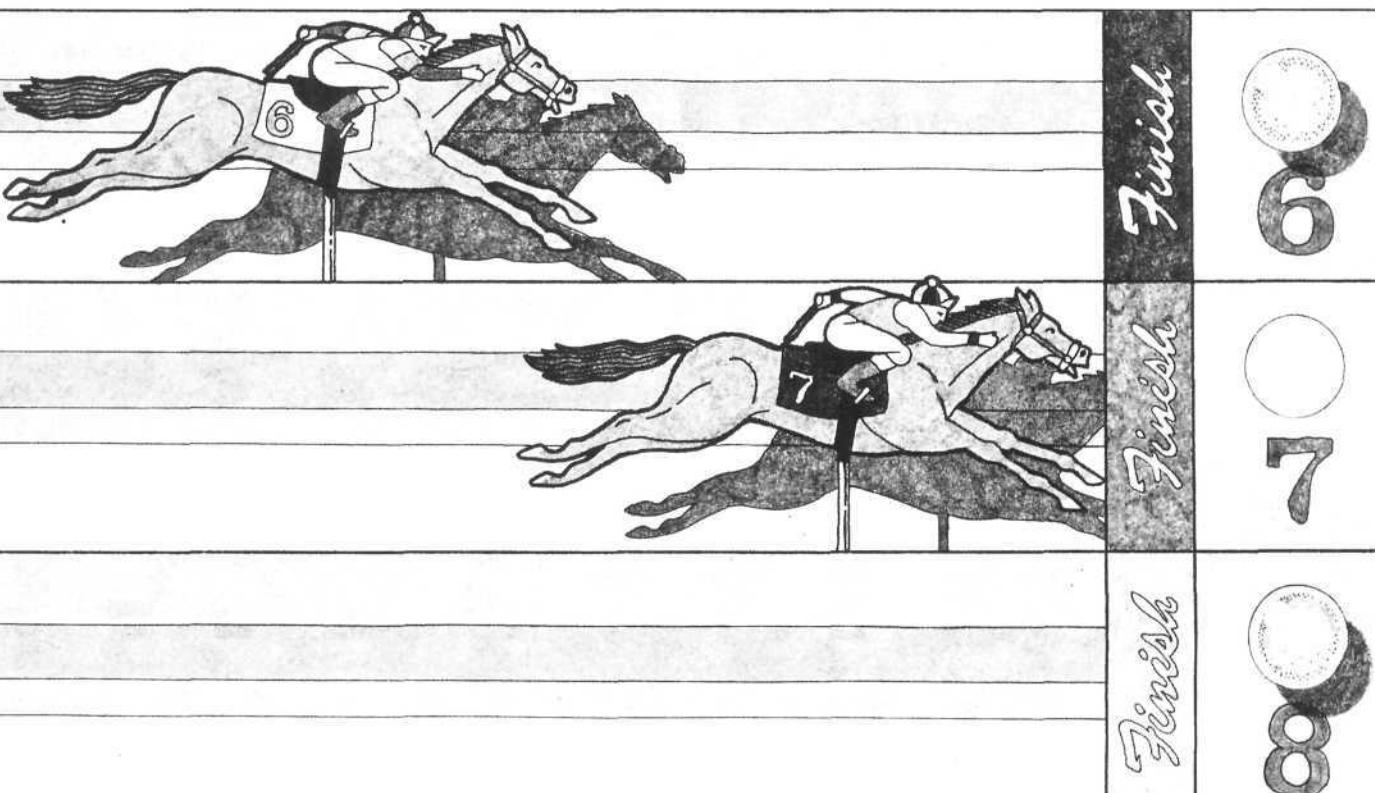
There's another thing. We make our own worlds, notwithstanding architects, planners and *maitre d*'s. They may try to direct us, but we all go where we want to.

Whatever you want is in Las Vegas, the Desert Owl that roosts in Nevada and calls, "Who looks for you?" Your answer comes: "Me." □

*Former editor, lecturer, professor, columnist and mayor of Wichita, Kansas, Bill Tarrant was named Deepwoodsman of the Year in 1980. From 1967 to 1973, he never missed a day of duck-hunting. He now lives in Phoenix, where his wife Dee operates The Monogram Shop.*



ILLUSTRATION BY MARK ZINGARELLI



# Where to Go and What to See In and Around Las Vegas

*An extensive, though not comprehensive, guide.*

by Diane Hlava and *Desert* magazine staff

In 1980, the 11 million plus visitors to the greater Las Vegas area spent more than two billion dollars, exclusive of gambling revenue. There is obviously much more to do in Las Vegas than just gamble.

The disparity between the glitter, congestion and material wealth of Las Vegas and the solitude, silence and natural grandeur of the desert is more pronounced in Southern Nevada than anywhere else in the Southwest. It is the most intense entertainment center in the world, with the exception of Manhattan—and it has outdoor recreation to match. The greatest spectacles of both man and nature are in and around the city. This is the attraction of Las Vegas. It is super-saturated civilization in the middle of nowhere, the diamond in the dunes.

Look through the following pages, enjoy the glitter of the city, then get out of town by sundown and enjoy, enjoy, enjoy!

## In Las Vegas

### Auto Tour of Historic Las Vegas

This trip around metropolitan Las Vegas highlights some of the historic buildings and sites that are worth visiting.

1. Ice Plant, built in 1907, is an in-

dustrial building that still supplies ice to Las Vegas businesses. 612 South Main.

2. Wengert House, built in 1938, Tudor revival style. Once the home of banker Cyril Wengert, a pioneer Las Vegan, it is now a law office. 1001 South 6th Street, at the corner of Charleston Boulevard.

3. Railroad cottages, built around 1910

in bungalow style. Constructed by the railroad for their employees, some of these one-story buildings are being restored for use as offices, others as residences. They're located between 2nd and 4th Streets and Garces and Clark Streets.

4. Fifth Street School, built in 1936, mission style. Now the Clark County Courthouse Annex, this school was built on the site of the old Las Vegas High School, which burned in 1934. 400 Las Vegas Boulevard South.

5. Las Vegas Hospital, built in 1931, Spanish style. The second hospital constructed in Las Vegas, this structure is in transition and no longer serves as a hospital. 8th and Ogden Streets.

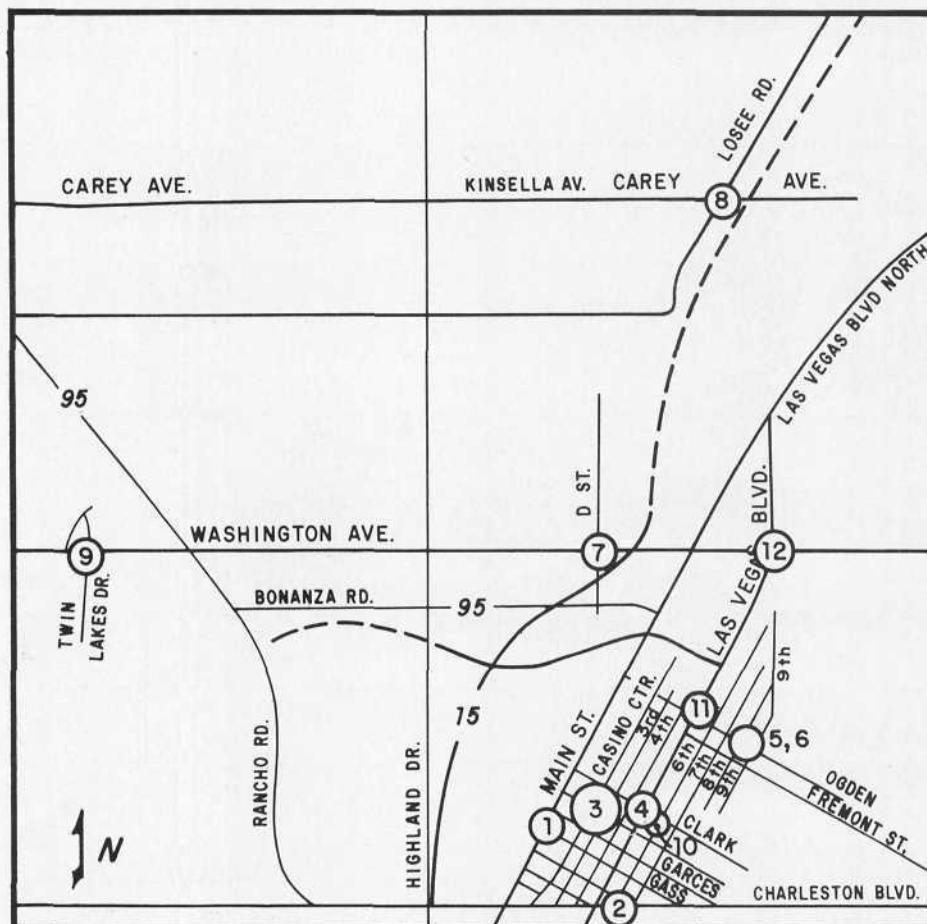
6. Waite Rockhouse, built in 1932. Constructed of mineral specimens found in the Las Vegas area, this residence is now shielded by a large block wall. 9th and Ogden Streets.

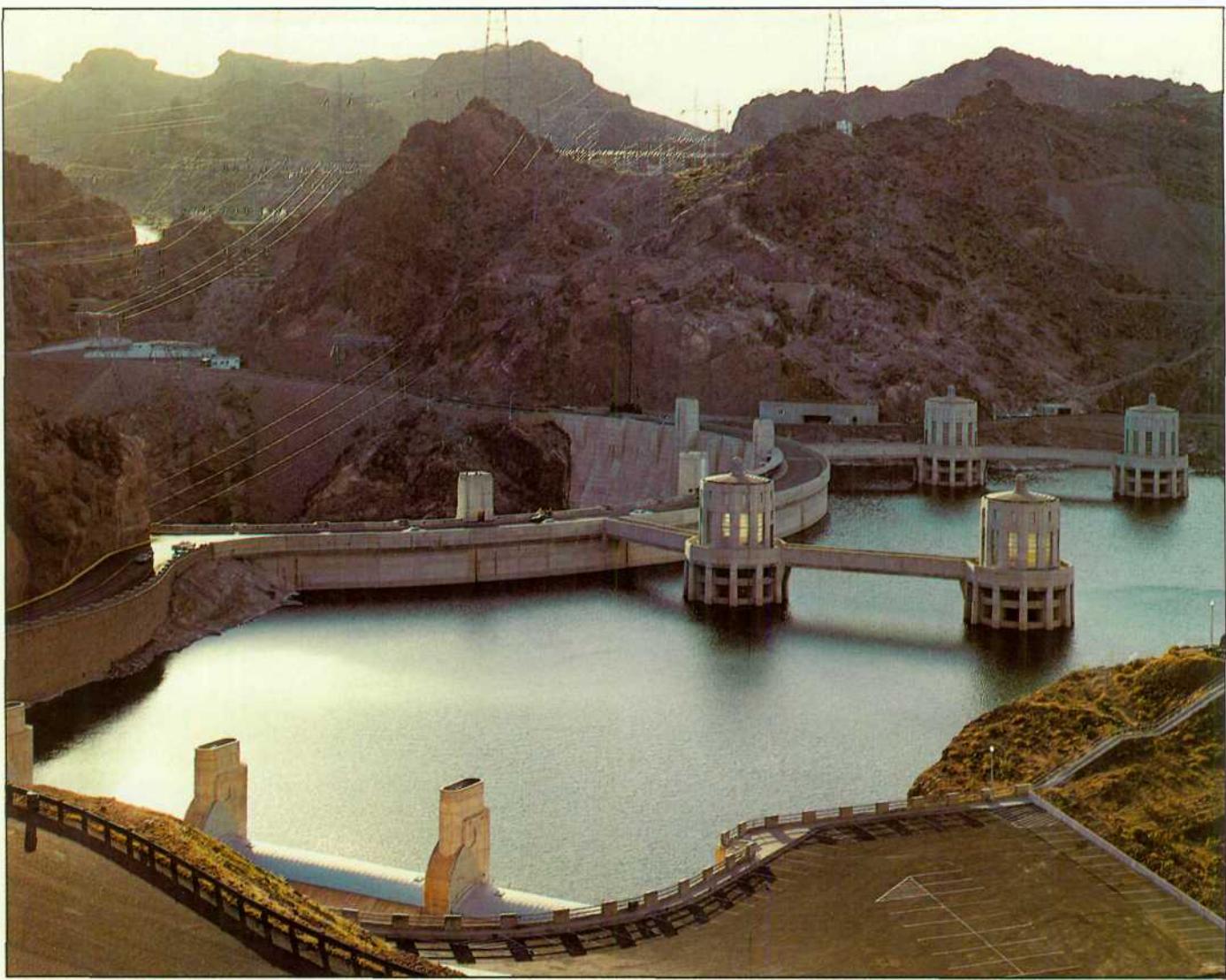
7. Westside School, built in 1922, mission style. Now undergoing restoration, it was the first school built on the west side of Las Vegas. D and Washington Streets.

8. Kiel (Kyle) Ranch. Originally owned by Conrad Kiel, the oldest structure on the ranch dates to the early 1880s. Now on the National Register of Historic Places, it's at Carey and Losee Roads, in the city of North Las Vegas.

9. Las Vegas Art Museum, circa 1935. Housed in a former motel, the museum has railroad ties from the Las Vegas and Tonopah railroad placed along the front of the building. Exhibits include all areas of fine art in permanent and changing displays. The museum shop features the work of local artists. Located in Lorenzi Park at Washington and Twin Lakes Drive, it is open 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Mon-

EVELYN PORTIO





Above, the magnificent Hoover Dam located in the Lake Mead National Recreational Area.

Right, the Strip, where bright lights pull you into their grasp.

Below, in contrast to the Strip stands the Old Fort at Las Vegas Springs.

DESERT MAGAZINE ARCHIVES





JEFF GNASS

## Las Vegas

day through Saturday; Sunday, 1 to 4 p.m., closed holidays. For more information, call (702) 647-4300.

10. Las Vegas Artists Cooperative, built circa 1920-1930, Spanish style. This art gallery houses work by members of the cooperative. The coop has been recognized by the Nevada State Historic Preservation conference for its contribution to historic preservation for the adaptive reuse of this former home, located at 421 South 6th Street. The coop is open from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday, closed holidays. For more information, call (702) 384-5470.

11. Andre's, built circa 1920-1930, Spanish style. Now a restaurant specializing in French cuisine, this building was originally a hotel. It's located at the corner of 4th and 6th Streets.

### Old Las Vegas Fort

Built in 1885 by the Mormons, and now restored to its 1929 condition, it is the oldest building in Nevada. The fort has a long, interesting history. Because of the artesian springs near the site, the Mormons built a fortified community as a way

station on the dry journey from Southern Utah to San Bernardino, California. About 1905, the fort became a resort, boasting the first swimming pool in Las Vegas. In 1929, the Bureau of Reclamation leased it from the Union Pacific Railroad, which then owned the property, to test concrete for the building of Hoover Dam. By 1941, the fort was a restaurant. In 1955, the site was purchased by the Elks for a lodge facility. Now owned by the city of Las Vegas, it is operated by the Daughters of Utah Pioneers and the Preservation Association of Clark County, Nevada. You can visit the fort, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, and view permanent exhibits depicting the role of the fort in the development of Southern Nevada. Also on display is a Mormon living room, circa 1900, the first of a series of exhibits of living quarters at the fort. In addition, demonstrations of pioneer handicrafts, such as doll making, button molding and bullet making are held regularly. Located at the intersection of Las Vegas Boulevard North and Washington Avenue, the fort is open Tuesday through Sunday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. year-round; closed on Federal holidays. For more information, call (702) 386-6510.

*Another picturesque area to visit; the White Domes area in the Valley of Fire State Park.*

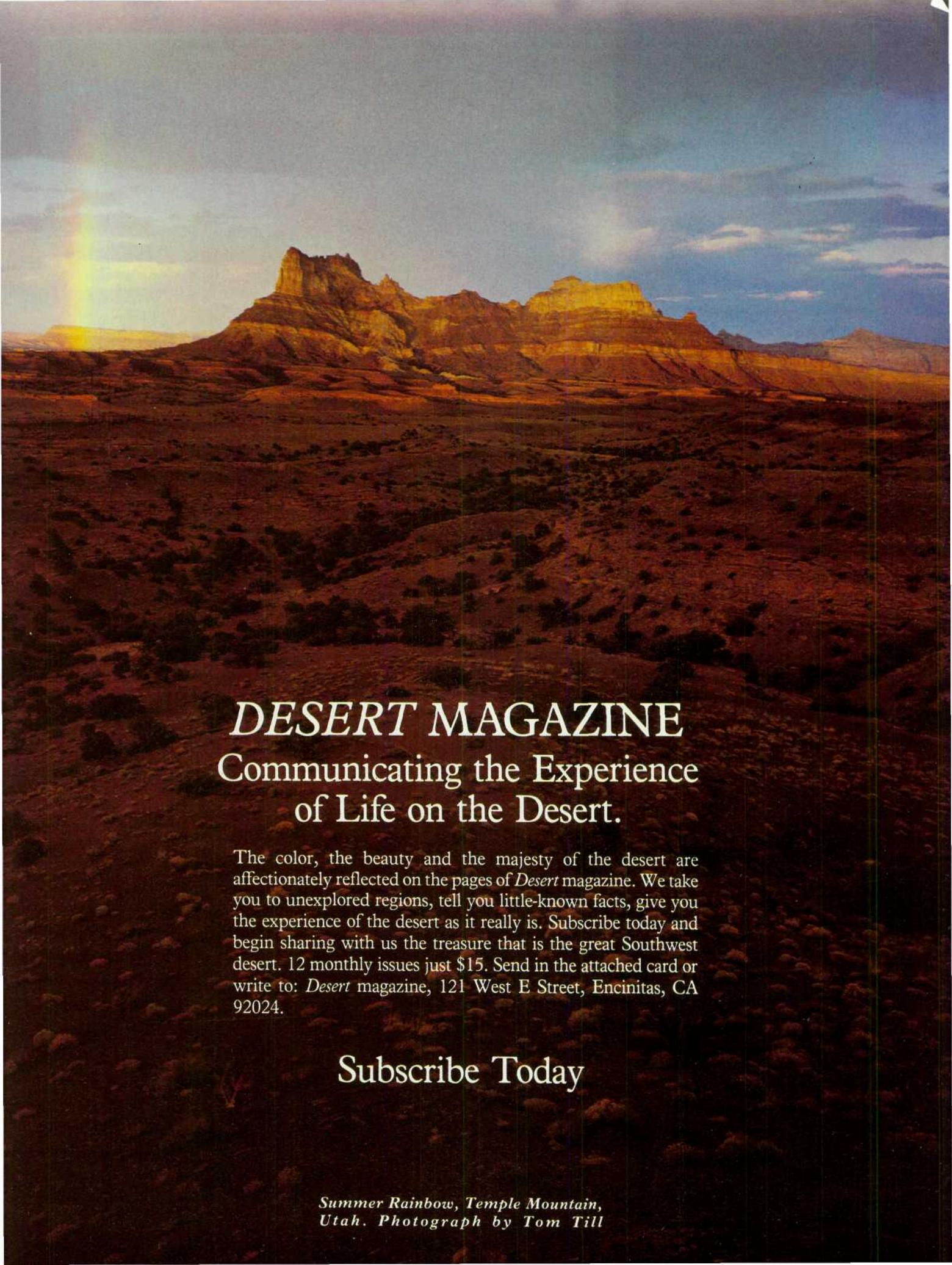
### Museum of Natural History

Offering permanent exhibits on the geology, biology, zoology and anthropology of the Southern Nevada and Mohave areas, the museum is on the University of Nevada Las Vegas campus at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway. Admission is free, hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays, closed on national and state holidays. For more information, call (702) 739-3381.

Another spot of interest on the UNLV campus is a monumental sculpture by Klaes Oldenburg. Near the Judy Bayley Theater and Artemus Ham Hall, this work is the first monumental public sculpture in Nevada. A replica of an usher's flashlight, it symbolizes entertainment, and is made of three-quarter inch Cor-Ten (rusted) steel.

### Local Tours

Air-conditioned bus tours of Las Vegas, Hoover Dam and surrounding points of interest as well as overnight bus tours of the south rim of the Grand Canyon are offered by Grayline, 1550 S. Industrial



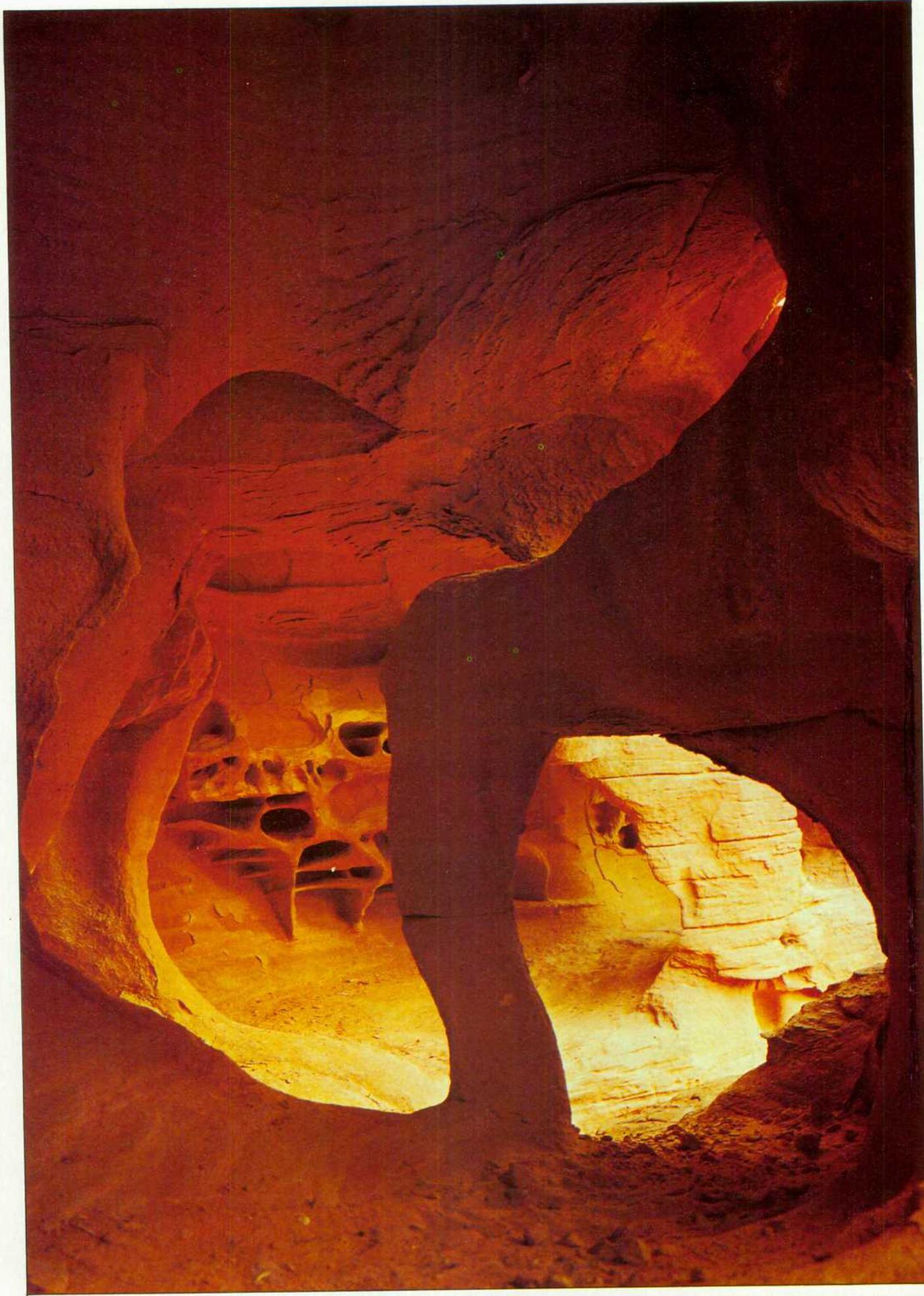
# *DESERT MAGAZINE*

## Communicating the Experience of Life on the Desert.

The color, the beauty and the majesty of the desert are affectionately reflected on the pages of *Desert* magazine. We take you to unexplored regions, tell you little-known facts, give you the experience of the desert as it really is. Subscribe today and begin sharing with us the treasure that is the great Southwest desert. 12 monthly issues just \$15. Send in the attached card or write to: *Desert* magazine, 121 West E Street, Encinitas, CA 92024.

### Subscribe Today

*Summer Rainbow, Temple Mountain,  
Utah. Photograph by Tom Till*



DAVID MUENCH

# Las Vegas

Road, Las Vegas, NV 89102, (702) 384-1234.

If you're interested in off-strip Las Vegas entertainment or cultural activities, Cultural Focus Tours provides several unusual programs. *Our Hometown Then and Now* looks at the history of Las Vegas through a tour of historic landmarks. *Classic Evening* offers dinner at a specially chosen local restaurant and a choice of a play, concert or dance performance. *Oasis Safari* takes participants to the Lake Mead National Park Service Headquarters for a guided tour, provides an opportunity to enjoy an art walk in Boulder City, learn about solar energy research at the Energy Systems Center and Nevada history at the Southern Nevada Museum. *Canyon/Ranch Country* looks at such scenic spots as Red Rock Canyon and Spring Mountain Ranch. For more information, contact Jeanne Clark, Cultural Focus Tours, 749 Veterans Memorial Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89101, (702) 382-7198.

## Scenic Airlines

If you're called by the wild blue yonder, you might like to try sightseeing in an airplane. Daily flights over the Grand Canyon are offered by Scenic Airlines. A four-hour flight over the canyon includes a half-hour refueling stop at the airport on the south rim of the canyon—\$128 per person. A day tour, lasting seven and a half hours, takes in more of the canyon and includes a bus tour and lunch—\$158 per person. Flights in Cessna 402s or 404s leave every half hour between 5:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Reservations are recommended during the summer. Scenic Airlines is located at 241 E. Reno Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89119. For more information, call (702) 739-1900.

## Big Springs

First described by John C. Fremont in 1844, these springs made settlement at Las Vegas possible. Several artesian springs bubble up, creating two large ponds. The run-off from these ponds creates a meadow area, from which Las Vegas (The Meadows) takes its name. In the early 1900s, Las Vegas was chosen by the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad as a division point, and later this railroad was acquired by the Union Pacific. Now owned by the Las Vegas

Valley Water District, wells in the Big Springs area produce nearly half of the water used in the Las Vegas Valley today.

For more information on this historic tour, contact Jeanne Clark, Allied Arts Council, c/o Preservation Association of Clark County, 873 N. Eastern Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89101, or call (702) 649-8725. A brochure with a map of the tour and illustrations of each building on the route is available for \$1.

## Within a One Hour Drive From Las Vegas

### Ethel M Chocolates

View the production of specialty box chocolates on a tour of the Ethel M factory. Named for the mother of owner Forrest E. Mars (of the Mars Candy Company family), Ethel M offers tours daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. During slow production times, a 12-minute video tape explains the manufacturing process. The adjacent candy shop, with turn-of-the-century decor and costumed staff, gets you in the mood for demonstrations of old-fashioned methods of hand-dipping chocolates. These demonstrations are held daily from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Ethel M Chocolates is located at 2 Buster Brown Drive, Henderson, NV 89015, mailing address is P.O. Box 18413, Las Vegas, NV 89114. For more information or to arrange group tours, call (702) 458-8864.

### Southern Nevada Museum

The history of Southern Nevada is detailed through exhibits ranging from fossils to the atomic bomb. Housed in the Boulder City depot, donated by the Union Pacific Railroad, the museum also has a gift shop, cactus garden and nature trail. On the grounds is the Beckley House, a railroad cottage built in 1912, now undergoing restoration. The Beckley House is the first of several historic buildings to be relocated at the Southern Nevada Museum. Arriving soon will be the circa-1905 Giles-Backus House, which is being moved from the former mining town of Goldfield. Located at 1830 S. Boulder Highway, Henderson, NV 89015, the museum is open daily 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Christmas Day. Admission is \$1 for adults, \$.50 for children under 16 and senior citizens. For more information, call (702) 565-0907.

### Old Vegas

Old Vegas amusement park is a commercial development that uses historical

Las Vegas as its theme. Recreating a western town atmosphere, the park features several historic buildings, Eureka and Virginia Truckee railroad equipment along with restaurants, rides and shops. Located at 2440 S. Boulder Highway, Henderson, NV 89015, the park is open Sunday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Admission is \$3.50 for adults, \$2.50 for children age 3 through 11. Children under 3 are free. For more information, call (702) 564-1311.

### Old Nevada

Based on plans of western mining towns, Old Nevada is a composite of frontier communities. Entertainment includes staged gunfights, a narrow-gauge train ride, plays, historical and wax museums as well as restaurants and shops. Old Nevada is 20 miles west of Las Vegas via West Charleston Boulevard in Red Rock Canyon Recreational Lands. Admission is \$4.50 for adults, \$3 for children 5 through 12. Children under 5 are free. For more information or a brochure, contact Old Nevada, Old Nevada, NV 89004, (702) 875-4191.

### Boulder Dam Hotel

Restored to its former 1930s splendor, this 54-room hotel is decorated in the elegant style of that decade. In keeping with the '30s ambience, none of the rooms have television sets. The dining room also features period furnishings. Located at 1305 Arizona Street, Boulder City, NV 89005, rooms range from \$25 to \$60. Call (702) 293-1808 for additional information.

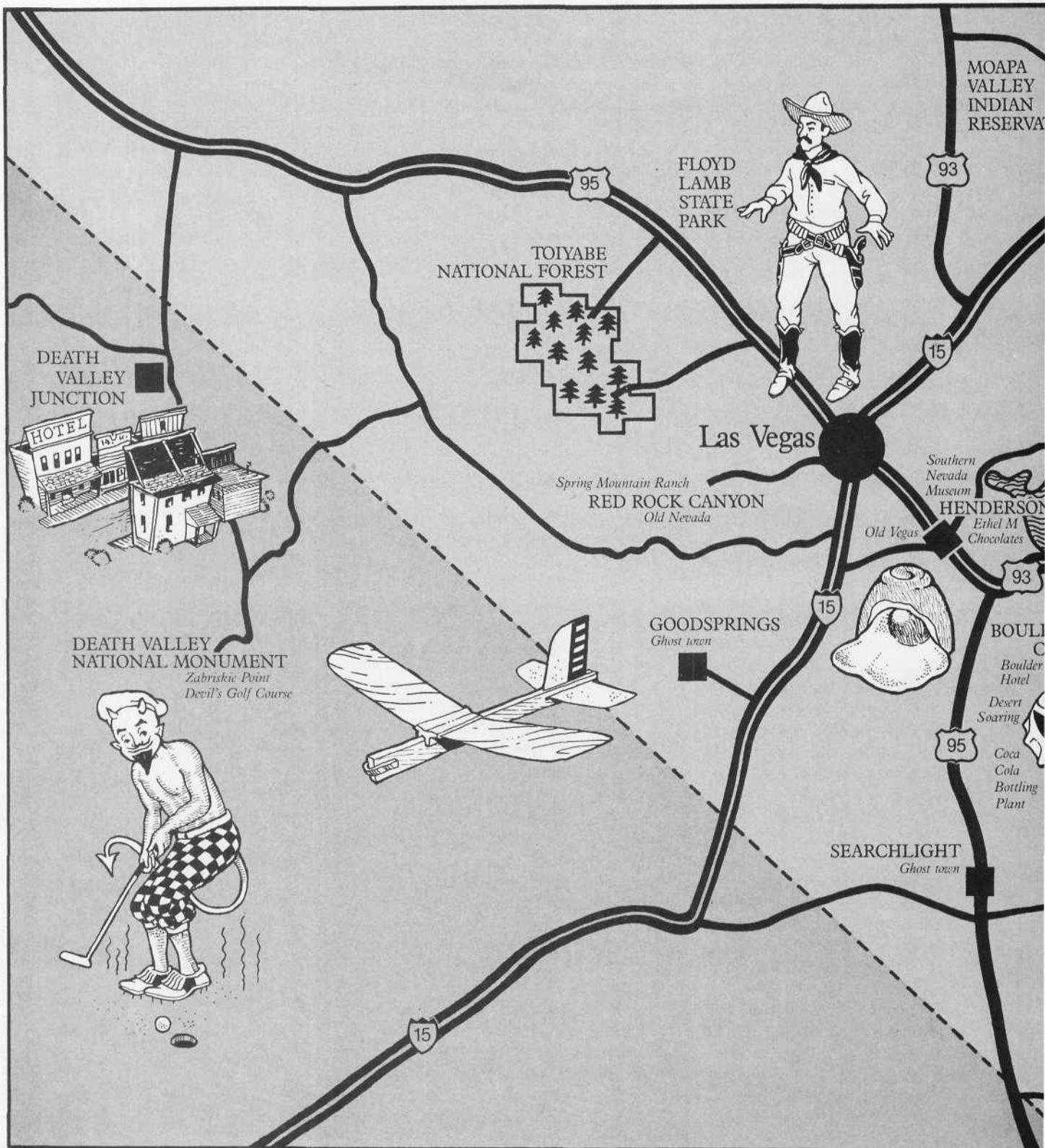
### Desert Soaring

For a bird's eye view of Boulder City, Lake Mead, Lake Mohave and Las Vegas, there are rides in a Blanik glider. For \$24.50, you can ascend with a licensed glider pilot in an aluminum craft. Most rides last about 20 minutes and are available to adults and children age seven and up. Reservations are recommended. Located at the Boulder City Airport, 1499 Nevada Highway, Boulder City, NV 89005, Desert Soaring operates Tuesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to sunset and Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to sunset. For more information, contact Dick McKnight at (702) 293-4577, or write to P.O. Box 637, Boulder City, NV 89005. Licensing instruction is also available.

### Helicopter Rides

Lift-off in a whirlybird. Available from Bauer Helicopter, Inc. are several tours of the surrounding area. Included are a four-

One of the many beauties of the desert, the sandstone formations at the Valley of Fire State Park.



## Las Vegas

minute tour of Lake Mead for \$7, a seven-minute flight over Hoover Dam for \$12.50, a one-hour tour of the Valley of Fire State Park for \$90 and a three-hour flight over the Grand Canyon for \$150. Fares are per person. Each chopper can carry four to five people. Reservations are

recommended for longer rides. Bauer Helicopter operates from the grounds of the Gold Strike Inn at the junction of Highways 93 and 466, Boulder City, NV 89005. For more information, call (702) 293-4022.

### Coca Cola Bottling Plant and Museum

Feast your eyes on an extensive collection of Coke antiques that include a vin-

tage bottle capper and a juke box that plays favorite oldies of past decades. The early 20th-Century decor of this restaurant and ice cream parlor was inspired by a photograph seen by owner Bert Hansen in an old issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Located in the former Gas Company building, constructed in the early 1950s, the Bottling Plant, open Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 9

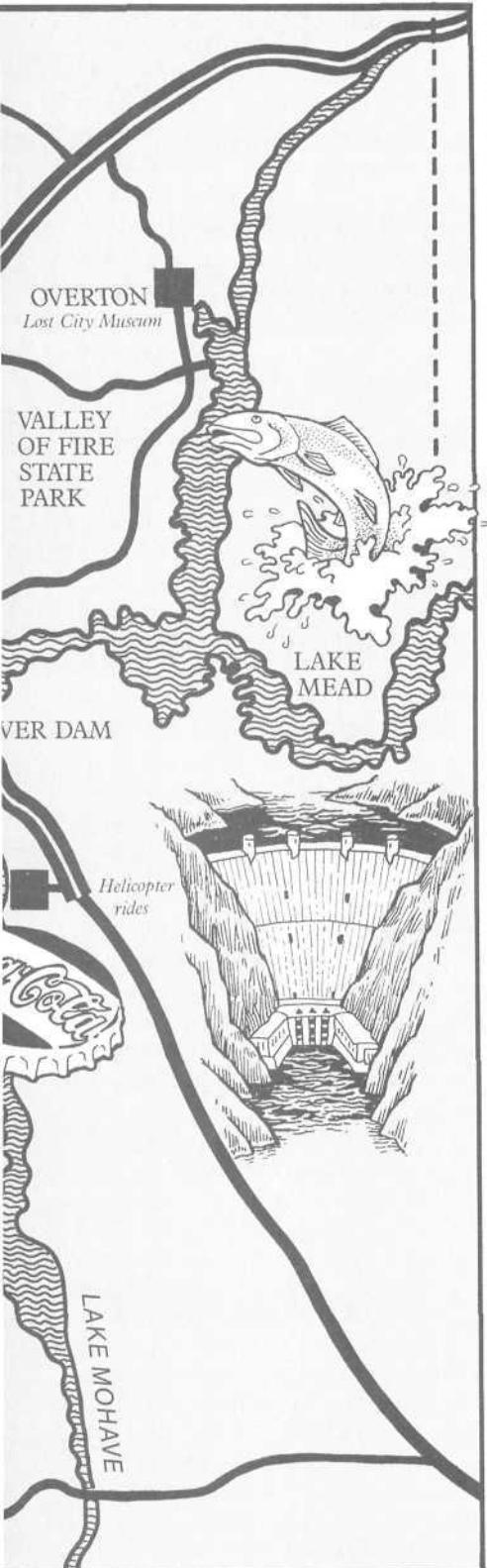


ILLUSTRATION BY MARK ZINGARELLI

by residents are sometimes available. There is no fee for entry to the reservation; visitors are welcome. Visitors should ask permission before taking pictures. Groceries are available. About 60 miles from Las Vegas, located off Interstate 15 on Highway 7, the Community Center is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. More information can be obtained by calling the tribal office, (702) 385-2787.

### Floyd Lamb State Park at Tule Springs

Enjoy picnicking, self-guided walking tours and other recreational activities at this day-use park. Trees and small lakes dot the park, providing a pleasant setting for touring the historic ranch buildings located here. Originally a dairy, alfalfa and fruit ranch in the 1920s, it became a divorce ranch in the 1940s. Now on the National Register of Historic Places, the park is open daily during daylight hours. It's located 20 miles north of Las Vegas on Highway 95.

### Spring Mountain Ranch

One of the most historic sites in the Las Vegas region, the ranch dates to the 1870s, when it was a cattle operation. In the 1940s, there was an attempt to raise chinchillas as well. From 1955 to 1974, the ranch had several owners, including actress Vera Krupp and Howard Hughes. In 1974, it became a part of the Nevada State Park System, and is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Picnicking and self-guided tours of the ranch house and grounds are available. On weekends and holidays, the ranch house serves as a visitor's center, with information about the ranch and surrounding areas. Located in the Red Rock Canyon Recreation Lands, 20 miles west of Las Vegas via West Charleston Boulevard, the park is open daily from 8 a.m. to dusk. A nominal admission fee is charged. For more information, call the park (702) 875-4141 or the Las Vegas District office of the Nevada Division of State Parks (702) 385-0264.

### Toiyabe National Forest

This diverse recreation area in the Spring Mountains, 35 miles northwest of Las Vegas via Highways 95 and 157, provides summer camping, hiking and horseback riding; in winter, skiing is popular. The Mount Charleston Lodge offers dining and dancing. Points of interest include Kyle Canyon, Cathedral Rock, Deer Creek and Mount Charleston. For more information, contact the Las Vegas Ranger District, (702) 385-6503.

a.m. to 11 p.m., is located at 1300 Arizona Street, Boulder City, NV 89005. For more information, call (702) 293-4666.

### Moapa Valley Indian Reservation

View archeological exhibits in the Community Center or picnic on the grounds of this Paiute community. Leather goods and jewelry handcrafted

### Red Rock Canyon Recreation Lands

Home of the Spring Mountain Ranch and Old Nevada, Red Rock Canyon also offers a scenic loop drive. There are spectacular views of the 3,000-foot red and yellow sandstone escarpment and the canyon along this 13-mile drive. Follow Charleston Boulevard west from Las Vegas about 16 miles, then look for directional signs for the scenic drive. The Bureau of Land Management sponsors hikes and nature walks in Red Rock Canyon Recreation Lands. For information and reservations, contact the BLM, (702) 385-6403.

### Hoover Dam

Designated one of the seven wonders of modern civil engineering by the American Society of Civil Engineers, Hoover Dam, a concrete arch gravity dam, spans the Black Canyon of the Colorado River creating Lake Mead. Completed in 1935, the dam began generating electricity in 1936, and was recently placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Guided tours of the dam are conducted daily between 7:30 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, and daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. the rest of the year. Admission is \$1 for adults; senior citizens with a Golden Age Passport, \$.50; children under 16, free. In the exhibit building at the west end of the dam are models of the Colorado River Basin and a generating unit, and a recorded lecture. The dam is located on Highway 93 at the Nevada/Arizona border. For more information, call (702) 293-8376.

## *Within a Two hour Drive From Las Vegas*

### Lake Mead

If you enjoy the outdoors, Lake Mead National Recreation Area offers a wealth of activities. On Lake Mead and Lake Mohave there's camping, fishing, water-skiing, houseboating, hiking, swimming, sailing and drives through undeveloped scenic areas. Nine major developed recreation areas provide visitors with a wide range of activities plus access to adjacent areas of special interest. Developed areas include campgrounds, picnic areas, boat launching facilities and a marina. Some areas also offer lodging, a restaurant, bar and groceries. Four areas are within an hour drive of Las Vegas, the remaining five require travel time of up to one and a half hours.

The Alan Bible Visitor's Center, 601

# Las Vegas

Nevada Highway, Boulder City, has slide presentations, books, pamphlets and natural history exhibits. A naturalist program is held in the evenings at the amphitheater at Boulder Beach. The visitor's center is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call (702) 293-4041.

Overton Beach is 80 to 90 miles from Las Vegas via Interstate 15 or Highway 167. This less-developed site offers no lodging.

Echo Bay is 70 to 80 miles from Las Vegas on Highway 167. It provides all facilities. Houseboat rentals are available here for trips into Grand Canyon National Park.

Callville Bay, 30 to 40 miles from Las Vegas via Highway 167, offers all facilities.

Las Vegas Wash, 20 miles from Las Vegas via Highways 95 and 147, has all facilities.

Boulder Beach, 20 miles from Las Vegas via Highways 95, 147 and 166, has all facilities. Houseboat rentals are available at Lake Mead Marina.

Temple Bar, 60 to 70 miles from Las Vegas across Hoover Dam via Highways 95 and 93 to Temple Bar turn-off, has all facilities. Houseboat rentals for Grand Canyon trips are available here. Sixty-seven mile long Lake Mohave, created by Davis Dam, offers excellent trout fishing.

Willow Beach, 35 miles from Las Vegas via Highways 95 and 93, has no campground, but all other facilities are available.

Cottonwood Cove, 50 to 60 miles from Las Vegas via Highway 95 to the Cottonwood Cove turn-off at Searchlight, has all facilities.

Katherine, 80 to 90 miles from Las Vegas via Highways 95 and 163 across Davis Dam, has all facilities. Houseboat rentals are available here. Located at the south end of Lake Mohave, just above Davis Dam, Katherine is an excellent base from which to explore Arizona ghost towns such as Chloride and Oatman, and scenic areas in the Newberry Mountains.

Side trips into scenic regions of the recreation area include:

Grapevine Canyon petroglyphs in the Newberry Mountains.

Joshua Tree Forest, at the upper end of Lake Mead near Pierce.

Gypsum Cave, near Callville Bay on Lake Mead, with an interesting 1930s excavation that uncovered remains of the giant ground sloth and evidence of early man.

Canoeing below Hoover Dam in the

Black Canyon. Launched below the dam, canoes can be paddled down-stream to take advantage of the excellent trout fishing.

For more information, contact the Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, (702) 293-8367. Directions to the above points of interest can be obtained through the chief naturalist's office at the Alan Bible Visitor's Center.

## Death Valley Junction, California

Founded in 1924 as a center for borax mining, this town, located west of Las Vegas via Highways 95 and 373, was abandoned in 1934. In 1967, Marta Becket and Tom Williams moved west from New York to revitalize the town, which is now on the National Registry of Historic Places. Becket, a classically-trained dancer, singer and actress, performs ballet and mime scenarios and stories of her own creation, playing one to 16 characters in a single production at the Amargosa Opera House. This season, performances are scheduled for Friday, Saturday and Monday evenings, October 3 through May 31, 1982. Decorated in Renaissance style, the opera house ceiling is painted to resemble the heavens, with 16 ladies playing antique musical instruments.

Performances begin at 8:15 p.m., tickets are \$3 and reservations are advised. During Christmas and Easter weeks, performances are held nightly. June through September, performances are on Saturday evenings only. Lodging and dining are available at the recently refurbished 20-room hotel. Daytime tours of the opera house are available by pre-arrangement. For more information, contact Tom Williams, Amargosa Opera House, Death Valley Junction, CA 92328, or call, with the aid of a telephone operator, Death Valley Junction #8.

## Death Valley National Monument, California

One of the hottest places on earth, Death Valley is best visited October through April. It's about 140 miles from Las Vegas via Highways 95 and 373 through Death Valley Junction. Camping, hiking, picnicking and points of interest such as Artists Drive, Zabriskie Point, Devil's Golf Course and Furnace Creek make an interesting trip. In Nevada, Death Valley National Monument Devil's Hole area is accessible from Las Vegas via Highways 95 and 373 to the Devil's Hole turnout—a gravel road. Once again, winter months are best for visiting this area. For more information, contact Superintendent, Death Valley Na-

One of our ghost towns emerges. Shown here, sunrise over the Old Cook Bank Building in Rhyolite.

tional Monument, Death Valley, CA 92328.

## Lost City Museum

Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1935, this museum is located on the site of an Indian pueblo that was occupied from circa AD 300 to AD 1150. This Anasazi site is sometimes called Casa Grande de Nevada. The museum contains artifacts from the ruins. Operated by the State of Nevada, the museum houses permanent and traveling exhibits. It is open daily, May 1 through October 31, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The museum is located at 721 South Highway 169, Overton, NV 89040; admission is free. For more information, call (702) 397-2193.

## Valley of Fire State Park

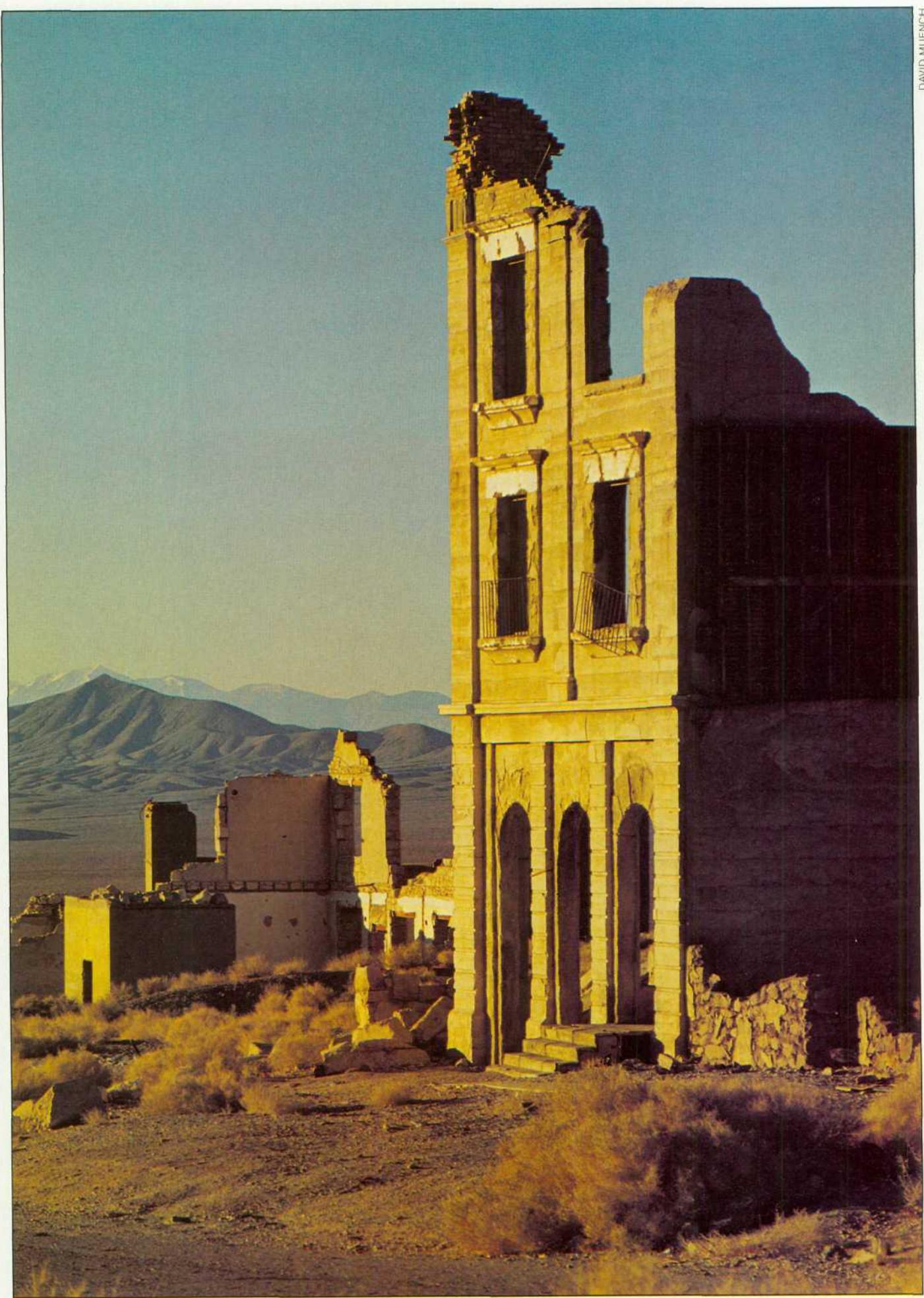
Red sandstone, limestone, shale and conglomerate rock formations create a dramatic setting for camping, picnicking and hiking. Petroglyphs made by Anasazi farmers between AD 300 and AD 1150 are also visible in the park. Located in the low desert, Valley of Fire is about 60 miles from Las Vegas via Interstate 15 and Highway 169. A visitor's center has maps and additional data on the park. For more information, contact Valley of Fire State Park, Box 515, Overton, NV 89040, or call (702) 394-4088.

## Ghost Towns

These relics of the past survive in desert regions throughout southern Nevada, southern Utah, southeastern California and northern Arizona. Too numerous to describe here, a few of the more accessible towns are Chloride and Oatman, Arizona; Searchlight, Goodsprings (partial ghosts), Potosi, Goldfield and Rhyolite, Nevada; Silver Reef and Grafton, Utah; and Old Ivanpah, California. Detailed information and directions to these and many other ghosts can be obtained from Sunset Books, *Ghost Towns of the West* by William Carter (Lane Publishing Co., Menlo Park, CA) and the *Nevada Map Atlas* (Nevada State Highways Department, Carson City, NV). □

Diane Williams Hlava is a freelance writer who lives in Los Angeles and writes for the Los Angeles Times.





# A Camera's Eye on the Desert Sky

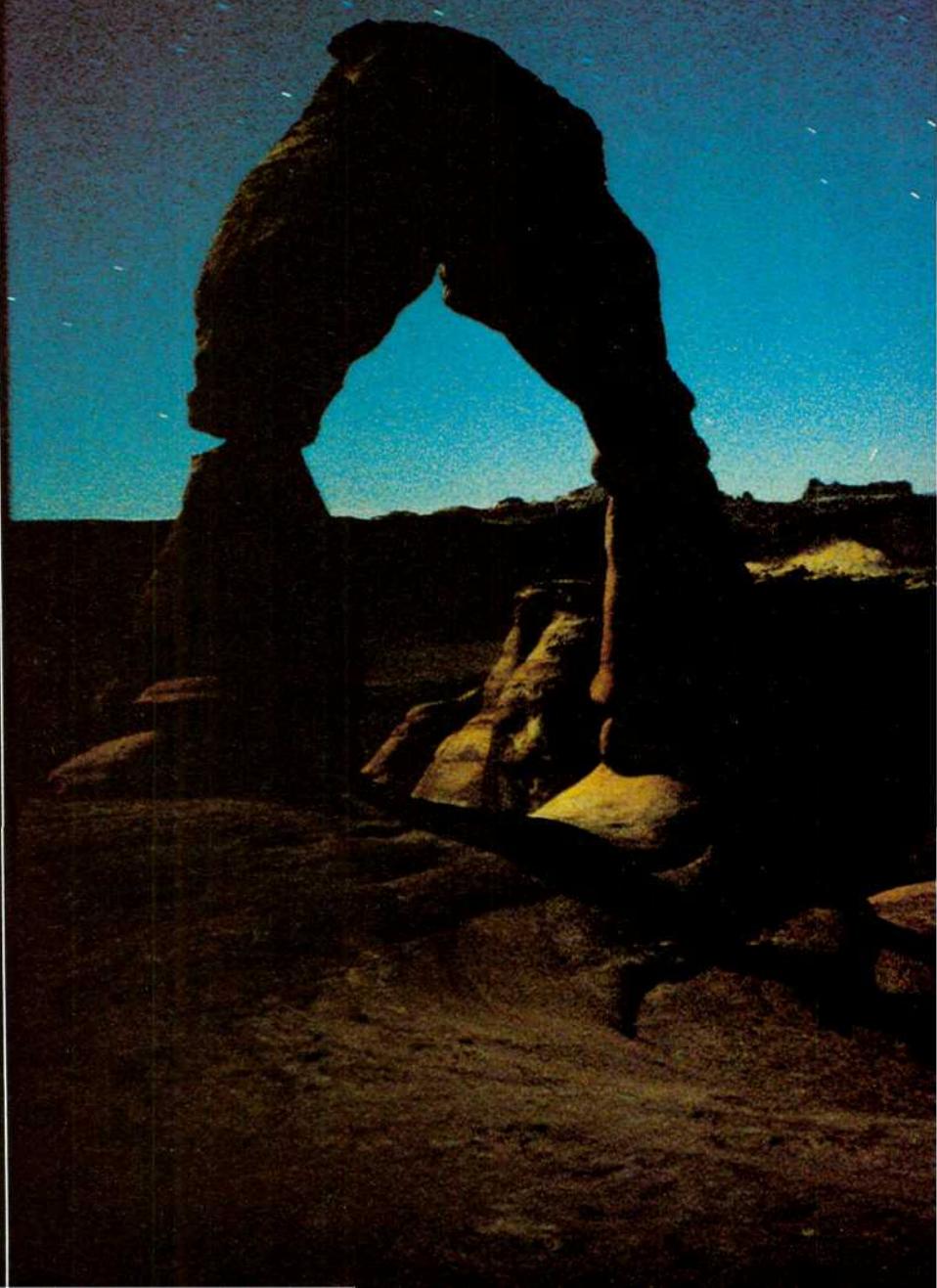
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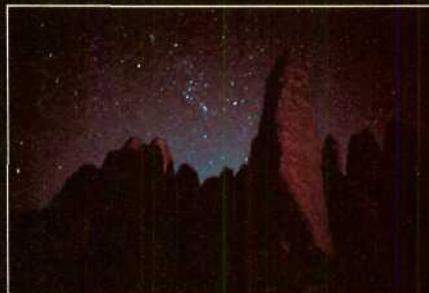
## Thomas Hewitt on the Sorcery of Photographing Night Skies

"On a moonless winter night, the silence is overpowering. All the animals and people are either asleep or hibernating—I feel as if I am the only being in a universe of dark mysterious land and astonishingly brilliant stars."

So writes Thomas Hewitt of his experience of photographing the desert sky at the interface of day and night. Hewitt is an applied mathematician working in the field of controlled fusion at Los Alamos National Laboratory. He is also a wilderness photographer, as he says, "when given the opportunity." Hewitt creates the opportunity.

"Since first seeing the desert a





THOMAS HEWITT

few years back, I have been drawn to its silent beauty and the solitude which pervades," says Hewitt. "Naturally, as a photographer, I would hope to be able to capture such a magical place." After some experimentation he found that he could, as these pages show.

The transparencies that produced these photos were taken with a Canon 24mm f1.4 lens at 30 to 50-second exposures. He used high-speed Ektachrome pushed one stop, and shot during a quarter moon, which lit up the background. Any longer exposure, Hewitt tells us, would have caused the stars to trail noticeably, producing an entirely different effect. Too much moonlight or even thin clouds or haze are likely to make the sky come out daylight blue, with mere dots for stars. This happened to Hewitt many times. The balance between enough light for scenery and not so much that the sky turns blue is difficult to achieve. Hewitt is happy to get a couple of good exposures per roll of film. Trial and error are a

*Far left, with Delicate Arch in the foreground, Hewitt captures the constellation Orion crossing the night sky.*

*Left, the amazing detail of a star formation above Arches National Park.*

central part of the learning process.

A wide-angle lens with great aperture is better than a normal or telephoto lens for two reasons. The short focal length of a wide-angle lens reduces noticeable movement of the stars. Also, a wide-angle can cover a greater area and the starlight is less diminished the higher it is above the horizon. The longer focal length lenses would tend to record the stars as less brilliant and show movement. (Also, for every f-stop of speed one can expect to record three times as many stars; e.g., f16 shows three times as many as f11.)

Hewitt also uses a level to be sure that the horizon is level in his viewfinder. You can also use flash to illuminate the foreground, but then you are limited to lighting close objects only.

Tom Hewitt has pushed the limits of the photographic process and come up with results we would otherwise never expect to see. If you've looked at the photos and wondered how he did it, now you know. □

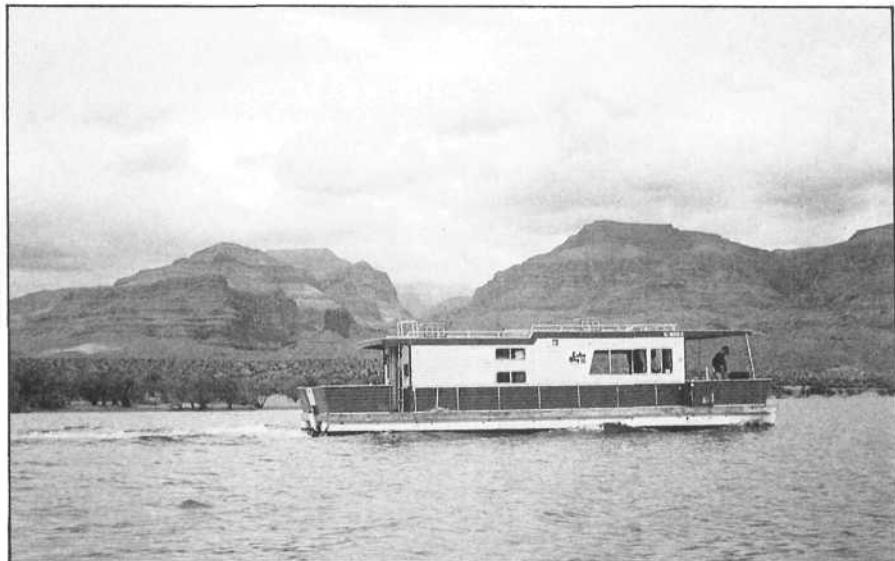


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*Cruising Lake Mead in a houseboat, a peaceful respite from the chaos of civilization.*

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# Into the Grand Canyon with a Mop



VIRGINIA GREENE

---

by Virginia Greene

---

**“T**HERE'S A mop back there.”

“What? Here, hold this line for a minute. What did you say?

“There's a mop there on the back.”

“It's a swab. And that's the stern.”

What had, in anticipation, been called adventure suddenly threatened, in reality, to become drudgery. Taking a houseboat 60 lake-miles into the lower reaches of the Grand Canyon had, from the planning at the dining room table, suggested the romance of the Caesars, the thrill of brine-swept buccaneering, the long thoughts of youthful dreaming.

---

*Left, Boulder Canyon, one of the many sites on the Lake Mead cruise.*

*Above, crossing the long expanse of Gregg Basin, our houseboat headed for the grandest canyon of them all.*



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**Our houseboat  
muddled along the shore,  
nudging into little inlets and coves.**

Our reasons for houseboating Lake Mead and rambling from Echo Bay on up the Colorado River as far as our floating palazzo would carry us were many. We wanted to explore, to have fun on the water, to leave for four days the chaos of the marketplace.

We were southwesterners—Arizonans; Californians. We knew the Grand Canyon. We have seen it from the rim since childhood, walked into it and struggled out of it, ridden muleback along its precipitous trails and fished its waters along the mile-deep floor of side canyons. Never had we seen the ancient monoliths from a houseboat. We thought of it as six people sharing an adventure.

However, this was something else. Call it a swab if you like. It was a mop to the three women aboard. A plain mop! Blue handle; clean, white strings showing much use; ironically carrying out the color scheme of the 46 × 14-foot blue and white craft in which we stowed a mountain of stores.

Cruising was luxurious and easy. The brochure says even kids can drive the fully-serviced houseboats. We would never know, because our three "old sea dogs" turned experienced hands to the wheel: Under cloudy skies, we sedately wig-wagged our way 13 miles down the middle of Overton Arm toward Napoleon's Tomb, where we lunched in the shadow of the great pebbly bluff, admired the Nevada/Arizona scenery, and complimented our choice of vacation.

Tom, Frank and I took our dinghy to Temple Bar Marina to meet Cliff and Marilyn Bernard, dispensers of food, drink, camping and fishing gear and endless information about the upper lake. While our houseboat muddled along the shore, nudging into little inlets and coves, Marilyn tipped us off to scenic places along the next 47 miles, answered our questions and gave historical background about the area.

The houseboat collected us and we headed across Temple Basin, made a circle

around the gigantic stone Temple which stands 350 feet above the waters of the lake, turned left and began looking for Burro Bay, our first night's tie-up. We would be 24 scenic miles from Echo Bay Marina, anxious to try our hands at cooking and sleeping aboard the boat.

The sun shone, we explored the sandy dunes, then opened the case of wine which Frank and Bobbie had earmarked for the trip last winter in Phoenix. Dinner was steaks on the patio grill; desultory talk and a midnight swim followed. We made up the double bunks and hunted in vain for bathroom lights until one of the old sea dogs remembered a houseboat has no headlights for night running and was inspired to push the switch marked "headlights" on the control panel. Voila!

Wild burros, relatives of those patient critters that helped prospect the long-ago mines in the area, roam the desert and come to the lake to drink. We had watched for them all day and hoped the moonlight would bring them to us, but sleep came first.

Wind and rain moved into our isolated cove about 6 a.m. Our three fishermen were undaunted but came empty-handed to the breakfast table.

The squall moved on and so did we, for we planned to go through Iceberg Canyon, the narrow strip of water and high sculpted rock formations that abruptly marks the entrance to the Grand Canyon. At that point, we would be 41 miles from Echo Bay. Another hairpin sweep of lake and river would take us 10 miles farther to Columbine Falls; seven miles beyond that, after a right-angle turn of the old Colorado River, we would be as far as we could go: white water. Before we could tie up for our second night on the lake, we had a long day of lake and river cruising ahead.

Intermittent sunshine and rain followed us through the narrows, 10 miles across the sand-bracketed bulge that is Gregg Basin and around Sandy Point, a great dune that sweeps into the blue waters like a

## The isolation was as serene as was the shadow-stained desert rolling back from the shore.

woman's softly tossed cape. We had seen no one else since leaving Temple Bar the previous day. The isolation was as serene as was the shadow-stained desert rolling back from the shore.

The rain moved east. Tom and Mae, our Hemet friends, took the dinghy and the photographer for a photo session into the myriad coves along the shore. At Center Point, we were surprised to see another houseboat, for we had become used to the solitude of the last 24 hours. They disappeared around a headland. It was the last we were to see of them—a tiny blue and white box moving beyond a clump of salt cedars against the dunes and black lava rock of the far shore.

After a swim and lunch, Bob and I took the dinghy around and down the narrows to Pierce Bay, a small, almost bell-shaped collection of water where a ferry had operated off and on for 60 years after its founding in 1876 by Harrison Pearson. The houseboat followed, but pulled into God's Pocket to allow its passengers to swim, read and fish beneath great sculpted monuments of multicolored stone. We were in the beginning miles of the Grand Canyon. The blue and white mop had arrived.

We made our way in the dinghy to the base of Columbine Falls, a surprising veil of natural spring water and winter snow runoff that falls 400 feet from the rocks above. Hanging gardens decorate the canyon walls and the silence, broken only by a rush of water on water, is comfortable. We drifted, watching birds dart along the surface of the lake. Now and then, a fish jumped and then splattered in a loud return to the water. Ducks swam in a tight circle near the base of the waterfall. Wind-eroded sandstone rose on all sides, a bulwark against the ages.

We went on uplake, running in the narrow canyon until we found white water—the end of the canyon for river-rafters. A group had just loaded into the Separation Connection, that 35-foot all-aluminum speedster that takes rafters back

to showers and other creature comforts at Temple Bar after 10 days on the Colorado. They were off with a huge roar of twin outboards and silence on the water was shattered for a long moment.

We turned back and followed them at a leisurely pace, found our houseboat and decided to cruise back as far as Chuckwalla Cove, our evening refuge. We talked, as we sat on the upper deck with diet colas, beer and cheese, about places we hadn't seen on the lake and river, and we made a decision: next time.

The following day was hot and still. We ran halfway down Gregg Basin, tied up at Sandy Point and spent the day in the water. Water skiers and houseboats, fishermen and runabouts joined us, then moved on. We were alone again when the rain and hail moved across the lake and interrupted dinner. Bobbie's enchiladas had to wait while we closed up, mopped up and secured the boat farther up on the beach. Thunder rumbled for a long time after the rain had stopped.

We sat late on the patio that evening, our last. Nostalgia was already setting in. Our blue and white mop dripped rainy evidence of its usefulness on the stern. The friend from Phoenix spoke wistfully of fish not caught.

It was time to return. The next morning, we cooled the waffle iron and stowed it with uncounted other items while we began the day-long trip back to Echo Bay.

The dinghy was once again launched off Temple Bar when we felt a sudden need for that last champagne toast. The houseboat cruised past the marina and Napoleon's Tomb. The dinghy caught it at Middle Point, where the champagne was poured under a ruthless sun. Burros appeared—dark silhouettes on the white bluffs—and Frank caught his fish: Three inches of optimism, returned to the aquamarine waters soon after the laughter died.

We cruised on. Back to Echo Bay. Back to turn in our blue and white houseboat, our blue and white mop. Our swab. □

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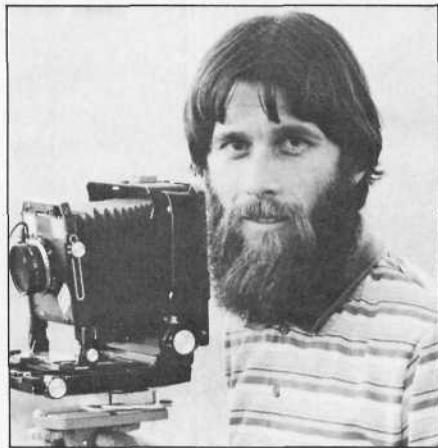
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# JEFF GNASS

## *Impressions of a Scenic Photographer*



*The desert is where many of my photographic skills were developed. I return with a special affection.*

Text by Jeff Gnass  
with Frances G. Smith  
Photographs by Jeff Gnass

**I**T'S A CHALLENGE to capture the elusive spirit of the desert or the freshness of a summer storm on film. I feel a sense of elated satisfaction when I do.

What is it about scenic photography that makes one accept an insecure, marginal income, being away from home for weeks at a time, 18-hour work days, heavy camera equipment on one's back and extremes of temperature from sweltering desert heat to numbing winter cold? The answer lies in the challenge of creativity, the satisfaction of being able to capture a fleeting moment and share it with others.

This is what drives artists. As a painter formulates a concept, I, too, think in terms of line, shape and space. I must extract the elements of a picture from the many forms present, emphasizing some, playing down others, to create visual excitement. This involves not only camera position, angle and choice of lens, but picking a time of day when the light is exactly right for the effect I am trying to achieve.

My approach to composition is more contemporary than classical. I am constantly exploring the different perspectives offered by wide-angle and telephoto lenses. Above all, I strive for simplicity, relying on strong composition to produce a pleasing, exciting picture.

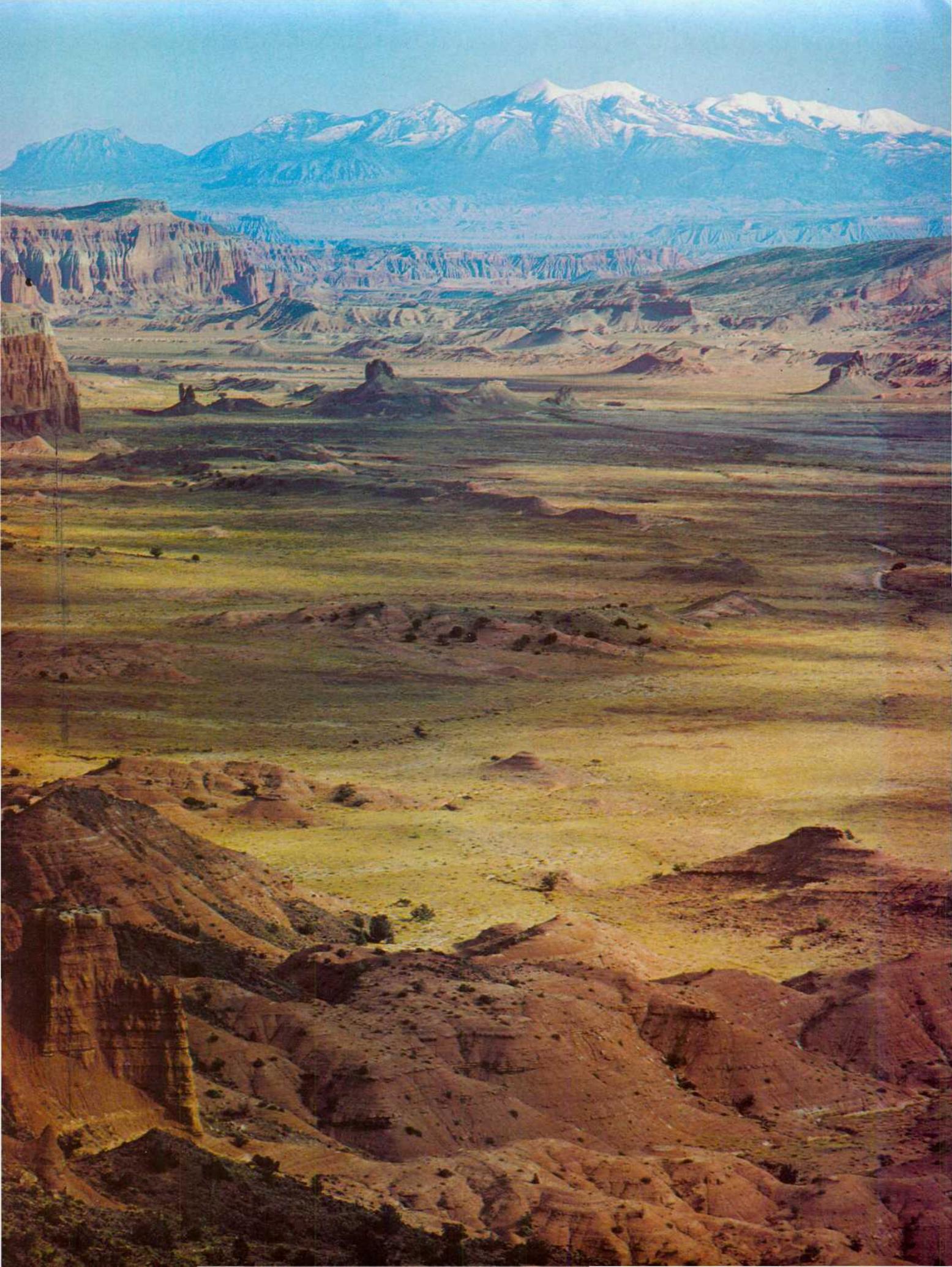
I love the solitude of the wild, the

demands of carrying a heavy pack, the excitement of exploring unfamiliar terrain and climbing mountains to get shots of remote areas. To stay in condition, I run several miles most days. Photography in the field is not without its dangers. Besides the hazards of sheer cliffs, there are some unfriendly desert plants. Once I backed into a jumping cholla while setting up a picture. I've been wary when photographing near cacti ever since. I enjoy camping, so nights spent along the trail with few conveniences are no problem for me.

When I go out into the field, I don't count on getting specific pictures, though I try to be at the right place at the right time. By this, I mean particular localities during certain seasons. My planning is broad and general: I must be adaptable. If I expect to be in Arches National Park the middle of April and I learn that a storm is blowing through, I will drive all night and arrive ahead of schedule to capture the changing clouds as the storm breaks up. I try to visit an area at the peak of the flowering season or the height of autumn color, though I may also return at different times of year.

I work out the best possible pictures under given conditions. Sometimes a location is worth a return visit when lighting or weather are more favorable. Other times, everything works together: There is minimal wind, the lighting is great and there's a lot of interesting material at hand. Then film holders are used up quickly as the subject is thoroughly explored with different lenses and varying foregrounds. A lot of energy goes into a session like this. It usually results in a number of successful pictures and a feeling of exhilaration. The best shots are spontaneous reactions to ephemeral conditions, like sunlight spilling through clouds. One must react quickly and precisely to such an opportunity. I

*Opposite, Jeff Gnass shares the beauty of the Henry Mountains at the Capitol Reef National Park in Utah.*



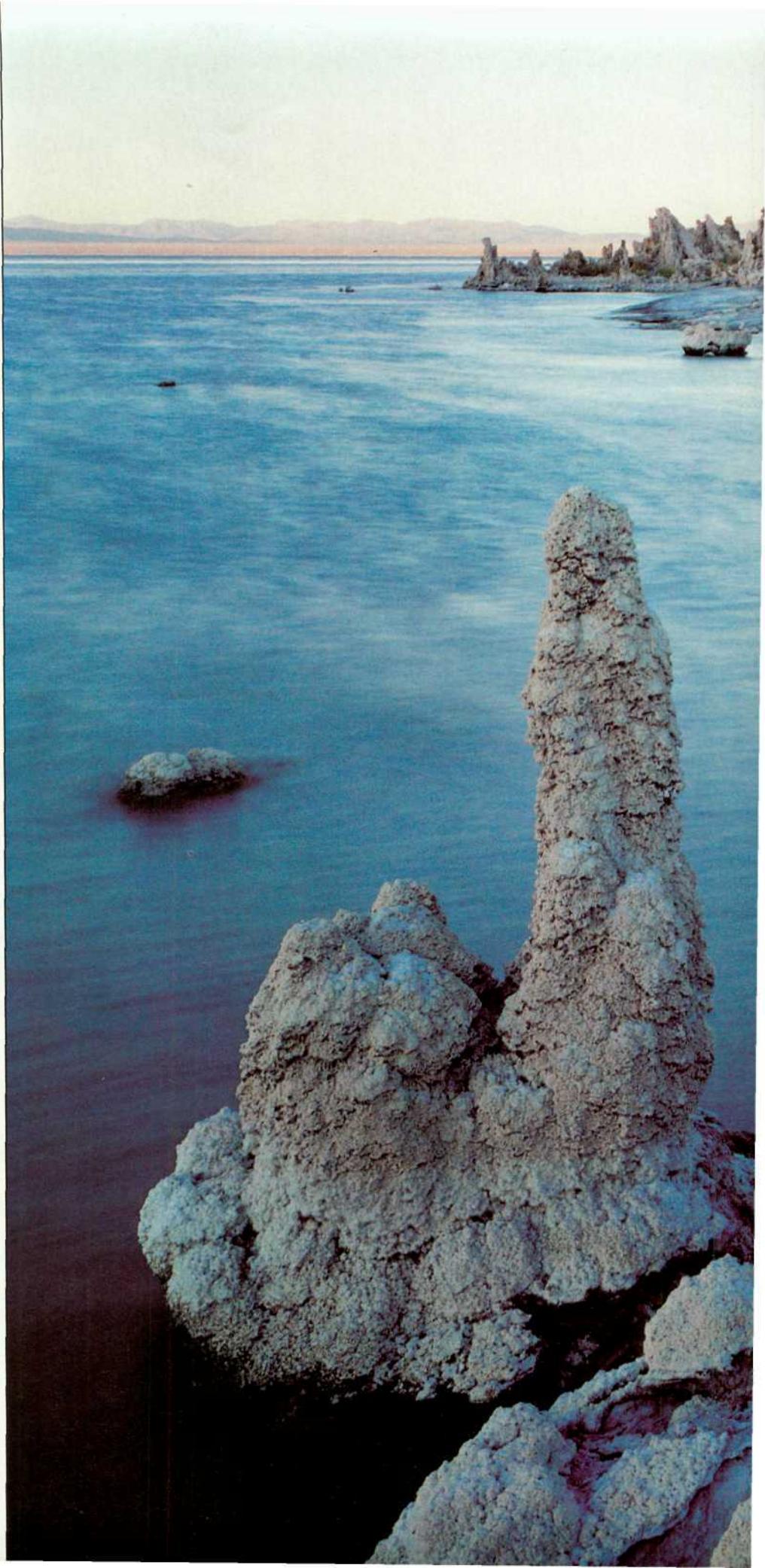
## JEFF GNASS

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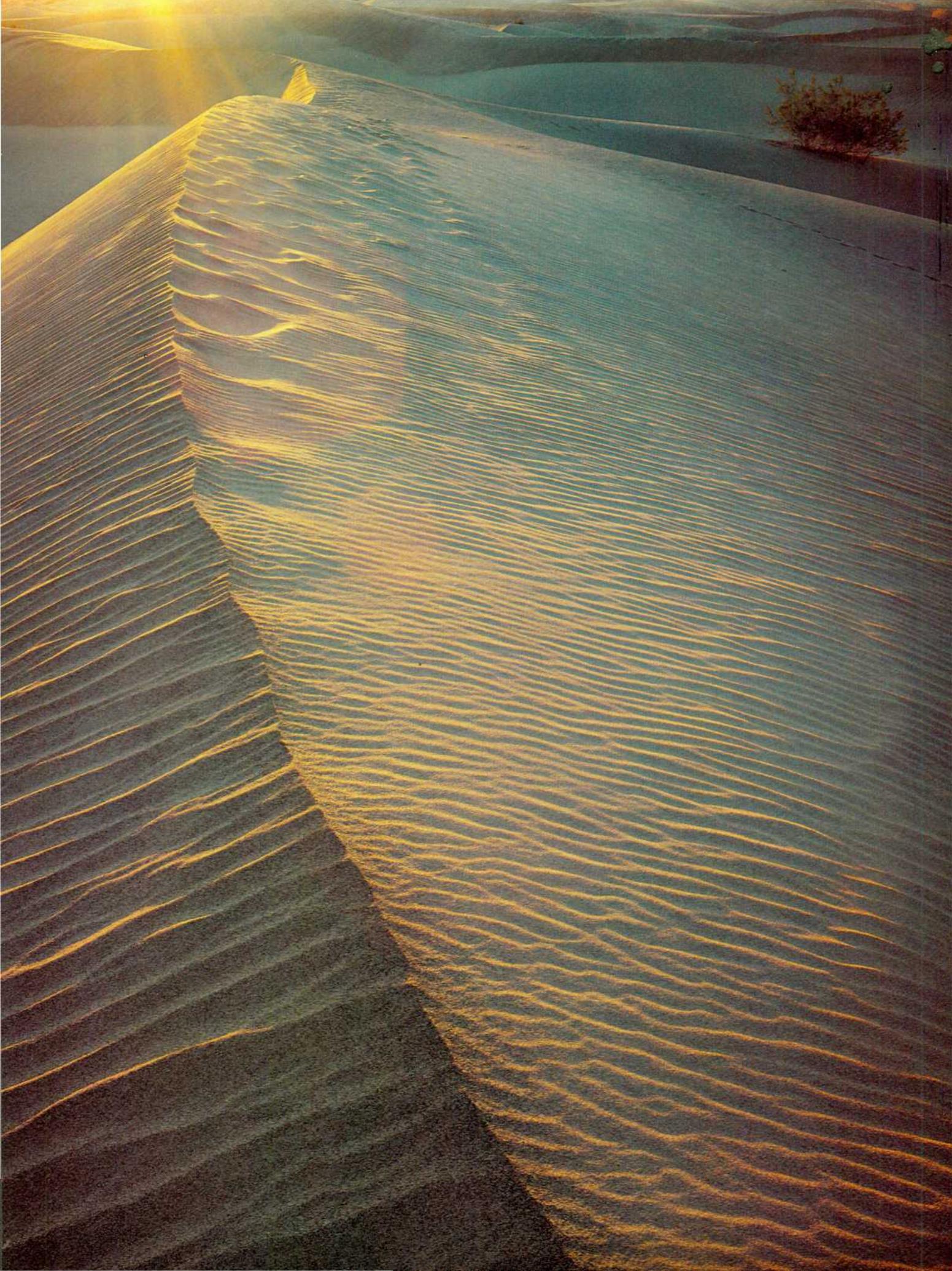
*I realized I have a  
strong creative  
urge.  
Photography offers  
me an unlimited  
opportunity to  
express it.*

---

*An evening scene at the Tufa Towers at Mono Lake Basin in the Eastern Sierra Nevadas.*







# JEFF GNASS

need my camera to be a part of me, since spectacular shots can be missed when dramatic scenes change in an instant. Though I am proficient with my equipment, I probably miss more pictures like this than I am able to catch.

When I go to a new area, I like to try to capture its feeling or spirit first. After I'm satisfied that I've accomplished this, I concentrate more on detail or shots that are not unique to that area.

There is a pattern in my daily activities. The lighting for most scenes is best from dawn to mid-morning and late afternoon through sunset, so I usually work during these prime hours and spend the middle of the day unencumbered by camera equipment, hiking, discovering what I am going to shoot later and deciding what time of day is best. Even my daily routine is constantly revised to capitalize on changing conditions. I adapt my photography to the weather. On an overcast day, I shoot detail or otherwise contrasting subjects, like those found in a dense forest or a deep canyon.

My favorite type of picture is what I call an intimate landscape; something between a detailed close-up and a panorama—say, a subject in the middle distance. I especially enjoy working with backlighting, because of the dramatic relief it offers. The desert is where many of my photography skills were developed; I'm always returning to those arid lands with a special affection. I am fascinated by the patterns in sand and slickrock, the flowing lines of thin-layered strata, the crossbedding of ancient dunes frozen in stone.

Beauty is a necessity. I gave up a secure job and a comfortable living because I realized that I have a strong creative urge. Photography offers me an unlimited op-

portunity to express it. It also allows me to interpret the grandeur and subtleties of nature to others.

I prefer working with a large-format camera and have settled on a 4 × 5 because it gives me the image fidelity I demand, yet is versatile enough to be handled in the field. The very nature of a larger camera makes me strive for excellence with every picture. There is a different rhythm to working with a technical camera, as opposed to a 35mm. I find the smaller camera more adapted for close-ups, moving subjects and spontaneous situations. Most frequently, I use my 35mm for flower detail and, for a change of pace, photographing wildlife.

One of the less exciting aspects of my occupation is handling the necessary business details and developing appropriate markets for my work. Then there are captions to be researched for the thousands of transparencies that are eventually catalogued and placed in my library. All of this is very time consuming. I usually work long hours when I'm home, so that I don't sacrifice too much of my creative time to paperwork.

Although I initially preferred to photograph only the wilderness, I've grown to accept Man as part of nature and to value the human element in some settings. The Indian ruins of the southwest are an excellent example of this.

Winter, summer; snow, rain; mountain tops, desert floors; forest shade, seashores; constantly changing, ever new. Each offers different settings to test one's skills, to capture beauty and share it through the medium of one's art. □

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***The best shots are spontaneous reactions to ephemeral conditions.***

---

*Jeff Gnass is a 34-year-old freelance photographer. Currently working out of Northern California, he photographs the outdoors of western North America. His work appears frequently in Desert magazine, Arizona Highways, Nevada magazine, American Forests and the Sierra Club Calendars.*

*Left, sunset and the sand dunes at Death Valley National Monument, California.*



## Dusting Tracks with Amtrak's *Desert Wind*

*There's no fear or loathing on the rails to Las Vegas,  
just friendly people and plenty of conversation.*

**A**T LAST WE'RE all on board: mothers and daughters, grandparents, babies, couples of all ages, single women and men. We stored our bags in the compartment below, hurried up the stairway to choose our seats, even struck up a little conversation with the people across the aisle. We're on the *Desert Wind*, Amtrak's sleek new superliner out of Los Angeles. The anticipation is running high. Although the train goes all the way to Ogden, Utah, before turning around, more than half of the 200 passengers on board are headed for

Las Vegas. They can't wait to drop a few coins into the slots and watch the sevens come up. Their wallets are fat and they're ready to go.

Instead, we wait. And wait. And wait. We're bound for Las Vegas, but right now we seem bound to the tracks at Los Angeles Union Station. It turns out one of the cars has a bad axle bearing, which could cause the train to derail; we sit waiting as the entire car is taken out of the train and replaced. "The first time I've ridden a train in 36 years, and look what happens!" a woman with a shrill voice

calls out impatiently, as the minutes tick by. "Come on, let's get going!"

After nearly an hour, we do. Moving out slowly through downtown Los Angeles, we pass warehouses, industrial storage yards, run-down hotels and parking lots. It's one o'clock in the afternoon, and the sun is trying to break through the thick brown L.A. smog. The heat outside is fierce, but we're immune to it in this big silver coach; there's plenty of clean, cool air coming in through the air conditioners.

Soon, we're picking up speed. When we pass a young boy waving to us from the

Text by Gordon Smith   Photographs by Zeke Larsen

second-story window of an old brick apartment building, we roar by before we can return the wave. We're sailing along toward Pasadena, the first of our four stops. The car is swaying gently from side to side as the buildings and telephone poles fly past.

The people around me are a mixture of every age and race, but they all have one thing in common: from jeans and jogging suits to summer dresses and polyester pants, they're all dressed casually. Clothes are not the only thing that's casual; so is the social scene. In the company of fellow travelers, everyone loosens up. Soon there are more conversations buzzing around the car than wasps at a hive.

Beverly Jenkins is one of the people on board the *Desert Wind* today; a student from Los Angeles, she's traveling to Las Vegas with her mother, who doesn't like to fly. "If I were going by myself, I'd fly, even though it's twice as expensive, just to get there sooner," Beverly confides. "I guess you could say I have Las Vegas syndrome. I've been there three times in the last six months. Putting money in that slot machine and pulling that lever—it just turns me on."

Dave Swartz, an auto glass installer from Hollywood, is also headed for Vegas, but not to gamble. He lived there for two and a half years as a teenager, and now he's returning to visit his family. When Beverly tells him she once lost \$400 at the blackjack tables, Dave just laughs. "The people who live and work there don't gamble," he says. "You learn not to." There is silence for a moment, and then Dave sums it all up as well as anyone could: "Las Vegas is just an incredible place. Las Vegas never sleeps."

Beverly, Dave and nearly everyone else on board admit to being on Amtrak for the first time. If you ask people why they decided to take the train to Las Vegas, you're likely to get a wide variety of answers:

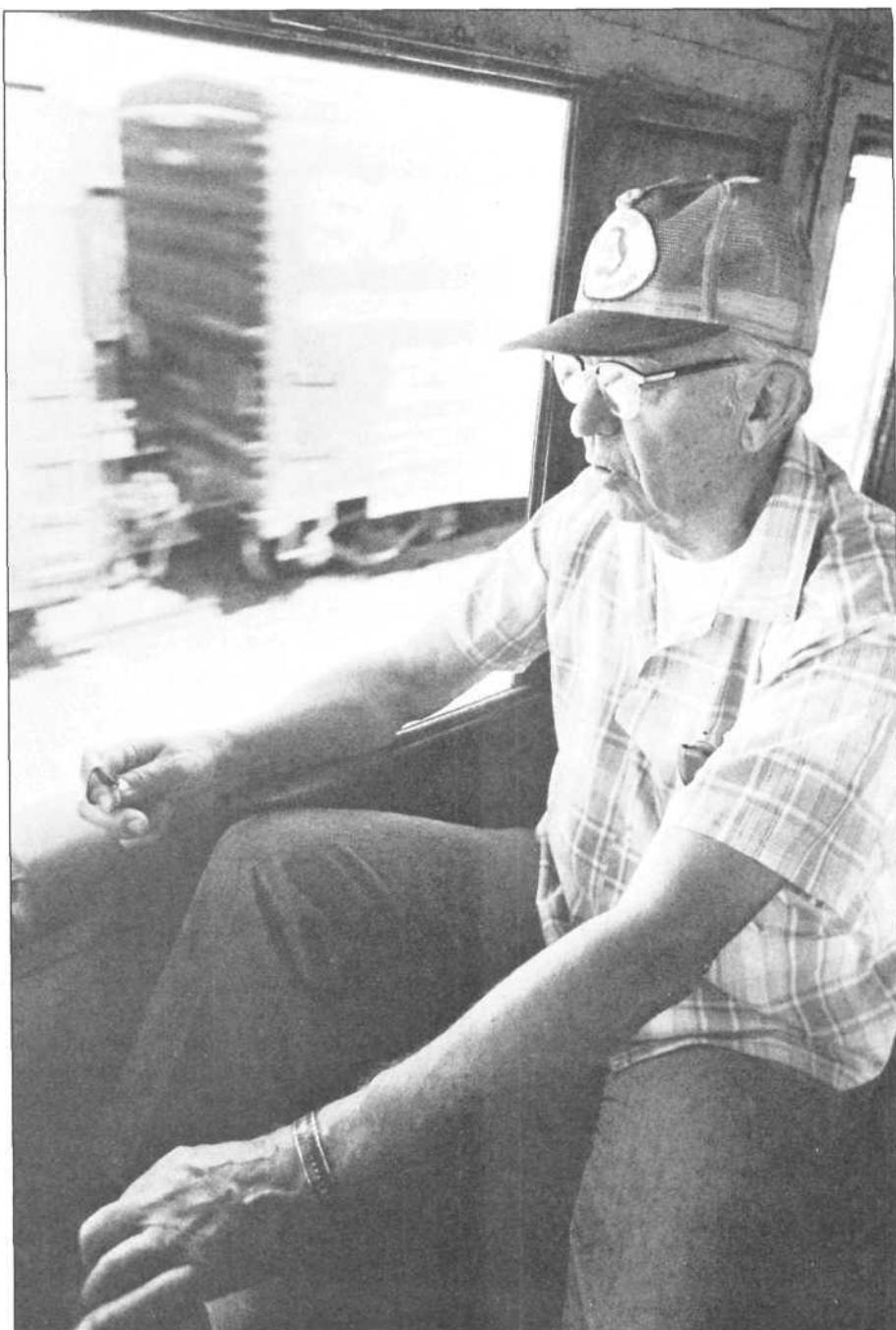
"You can kick back and watch the scenery."

"You can sleep the whole way."

"I'm tired of driving out there."

"It's cheap."

As a matter of fact, Amtrak's standard round-trip fare from Los Angeles to Las Vegas costs almost as much as taking a plane: about \$100. However, Amtrak's five-day excursion fare of \$55 (you have to return within five days) beats the air fare easily, and most of the train seats are roomier and more comfortable than those on a jet or a bus. The *Desert Wind* takes seven and a half hours to run the 300 miles from Los Angeles to Las Vegas (by car, the trip takes about six hours), but that just gives you extra time to have a drink or



Art Laurie, engineer. Without him *Desert Wind* wouldn't make it to Las Vegas.

three and hear the latest gambling gossip.

"The train is more comfortable and more convenient than driving yourself," insists Conductor F. W. Dean, who works the *Desert Wind* between Los Angeles and Barstow. "You can sit here and talk, you can have a drink, and you don't have to worry about looking in the rearview mirror all the time for the Man."

At 34, Dean is one of Amtrak's youngest conductors. Sitting down to chat with me during a spare moment between Los Angeles and Pasadena, he tells me the ride to Las Vegas is always livelier than the return trip: the excitement level is higher, the people drink a little more and they're a little harder to control. "On the way back, a lot of people are down, they're already

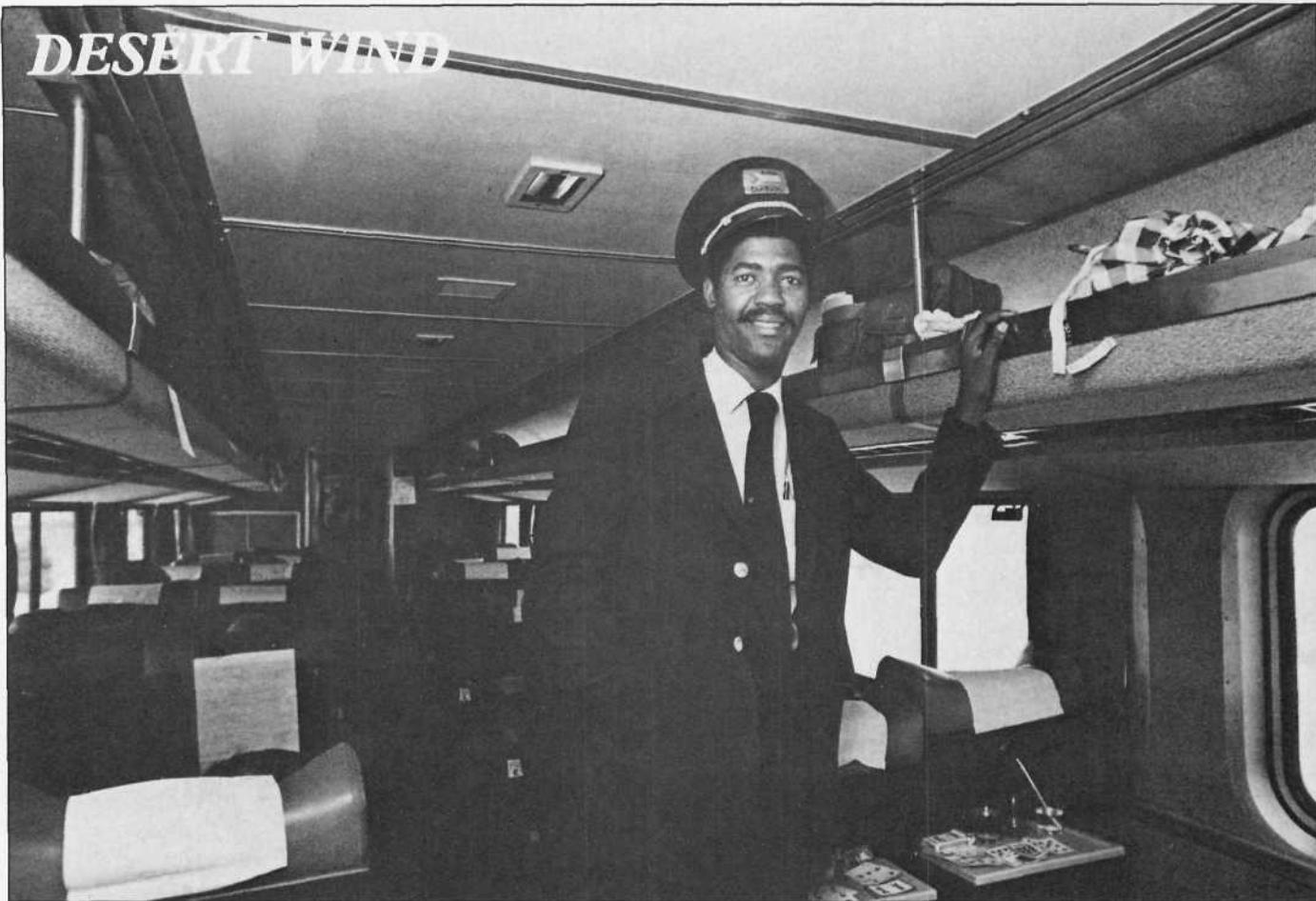
burned out," Dean says with a smile. "Everyone's real nice then."

"Pasadena is our next stop," says the voice over the loudspeaker. "Pasadena, in about two minutes."

**D**EAN goes back to work, and soon the train comes to a stop in front of Pasadena station. The doors to the cars are flung open, and we take on more passengers. After just a few minutes, we're under way again, gliding between rows of stucco houses, past the back yards and swimming pools of suburbia.

A middle-aged woman walks down the aisle past me, steadying herself against the constant swaying of the train by holding

# DESERT WIND



Conductor F. W. Dean in his domain, one of the cars of the Desert Wind.

onto the seats as she goes. The train lurches suddenly and she nearly falls. "I feel like I'm drunk!" she complains good-naturedly. "In fact, if I was drunk, maybe I could walk straighter!"

It's an interesting thought, and a few minutes after the woman has moved on, I head for the lounge car. Actually, I'd rather eat lunch before downing a few beers, but with the dining car full and the lounge car half empty, what are you going to do?

The lounge car, near the front of the train, is sort of an eternal party; the people on the rest of the train are friendly, but the people in the lounge car are *very* friendly. The service is sporadic, but no one seems to care.

I slide into an empty booth and soon find myself talking to an elderly gentleman across the aisle. His name is Bill Sweeney, and he's a retired ferry captain from San Diego. Bill is one of the few people on board who has ridden the *Desert Wind* to Las Vegas before; this is his third or fourth trip since the route opened in October of 1979. "How long would it take me to drive there instead of take the train?" he repeated when I asked him. "Well, it depends how fast you drive and how many speeding tickets you get, but why should I drive? My car might break down or

something. Besides," he adds with a wink, "on the train I don't have to worry about this." He cocks his head toward the full glass of beer on the table in front of him.

## **The *Desert Wind* is like a tunnel—a gleaming, air- conditioned tunnel that gets you through the desert without ever letting you know what it's really like.**

Out the window the air has cleared, and the San Gabriel Mountains can be seen to the north. We stop briefly in Pomona and again in San Bernardino, and then we begin the long haul over Cajon Pass. The train slows, laboring up the grade. There's not a house to be seen out here; only steep hills covered with green chaparral. Soon we lumber across Interstate 15, where cars

and trucks are whizzing along in the freeway lanes, their windows glinting in the sunlight.

From time to time the train curves around a long bend in the track, and when it does, we can see the two big V-16 diesel engines, 3,000 horsepower each, that are hauling us over the mountains. About halfway to the summit, we overtake a long freight train going in the same direction. We start to pass it, but as we do the freight seems to pick up speed. For a few moments the two trains are neck and neck—the freight has four engines, the *Desert Wind* only two—but our lighter load begins to tell and we leave the freight behind. In a few more minutes we're over the pass and hurtling down the long grade toward the Mohave desert. Abruptly, the greenery of the San Gabriels gives way to desert plains dotted with agave and creosote.

The dining car is still crowded, but Charles Bailey, a postal carrier from Playa del Rey (near Santa Monica) invites me to share his table. Bailey is on his way to Salt Lake City—"I've got to get out of L.A.; got to clean my lungs out once in awhile," he says—and he doesn't plan to stop in Las Vegas. "My money comes too hard for me to lose it gambling," he tells me over lunch.

Amtrak's lunches, Bailey and I agree,

are nothing special. They're fresher than what you get on the airlines, but the turkey sandwich, for example, is about as basic as it gets: a slice of turkey between two pieces of white bread, served with potato chips. You can take snacks like cheeseburgers, chips, soft drinks and beer back to your seat, but why do that? Eating in the dining car is a good way to make new friends.

"The next stop is Barstow," crackles the loudspeaker. "Barstow, in four minutes. If you're getting off the train in Barstow, please check around your seat. . . ."

We've been traveling alongside the bed of the Mohave River, a marshy green ribbon in the desert's arid expanse. Houses begin to appear, and, as we pull into Barstow station, we can see a few new passengers waiting on the platform, bags in hand. A new conductor and two new brakemen are waiting there, too; they'll take over from F. W. Dean and crew to see us through to Las Vegas.

**A** FEW SHORT minutes later, we're pulling out. We won't stop again until we reach Las Vegas, four hours and some 160 miles away. It's the longest stretch on the trip, and we're going to run it as fast as we can in an effort to make up the time lost in Los Angeles.

Back in my seat, I stare out the window as the desert slides by, mile after mile. It seems as though we can't possibly be going more than 40 miles an hour. Actually, we're going more than 80. You can calculate the train's speed yourself by using telephone poles that line the route: every half mile is a pole with a number on it, and every quarter mile in between is a pole with a white band on it. Check how many quarter-miles you go in a minute, multiply the result by 60, and you've got the train's speed in miles per hour.

Gauging the train speed is just one of the many things you can do to pass time aboard the *Desert Wind*. Drinking is another favorite diversion, so are sleeping and reading. You're free to explore the train, too, and somewhere between Barstow and the California/Nevada border, that's what I decide to do.

The bathrooms, downstairs next to the baggage racks, are worth mentioning; they've got more gadgets than a Swiss army knife, and with at least five bathrooms per car, there's no waiting in line. For my money, the most fascinating thing aboard the *Desert Wind* is the sleeping car (for long-distance travelers). The individual compartments, off a corridor so narrow you have to turn sideways to squeeze by someone coming the other way, are mysterious, curtained little nooks. It's easy to imagine, *a la* Alfred Hitchcock, sinister agents or doctors in them, plotting

unspeakable murders.

As I'm passing through the sleeping car, the door to one of these compartments unexpectedly slides open, and I wait for some poor innocent to fall out, clutching at a growing red stain on his shirt and gasping out his last breath. The fact that the door has been opened by a pair of tots sipping canned soft drinks is a disappointment I can't quite overcome for the rest of the trip.

In the last car on the train I stop to talk to Joe and Ann Drone and Bob and Linda Wagner, all from Evansville, Indiana. None of them have been to Las Vegas before, but they have a pretty good idea of what to do there. "We plan on going home, well, not millionaires, but halfway there," deadpans Bob Wagner.

"We plan on going home flat broke," corrects Linda.

Out the back window, the sun is sinking in the late afternoon sky. A raven soars by, cawing soundlessly on the other side of the glass. Dust is swirling over the rails as we pass, and for the first time on the trip I can feel the heat of the desert coming through the window. In a way, the *Desert Wind* is like a tunnel—a gleaming, air-conditioned, 300-mile-long tunnel that gets you through the desert without ever letting you know what it's really like. The scenery is beautiful, but it's like a museum display—behind glass, far away.

Back in the lounge car, rear brakeman Jack Kent is sipping coffee. Kent is a veteran train man, and he's telling me about some of the sandstorms he's seen blowing through this section of the route when the loudspeaker announces: "Ladies and gentlemen, we're now crossing the Nevada state line."

"It's been a quiet trip," observes Kent. On past runs, he recalls, ornery passengers have tried to take over sleeping compartments they haven't paid for, and he's even had to break up a few fistfights. "You run across a lot of strange people on this train, but you meet a lot of nice ones, too," he says.

As Kent finishes his coffee and leaves, Beverly Jenkins and her mother Doris enter the lounge car and sit down for a beer. "I think it's a nice ride," says Doris when I ask. "It's my first time, but I'll take the train again. I like it."

"Yeah, but it's real slow," puts in Beverly. "It's takin' a long time." We've been told we will be in Las Vegas on schedule—seemingly a minor miracle, considering how late we got started. Insiders say that Union Pacific, which operates the tracks from Los Angeles to Las Vegas, has deliberately padded the schedule of the *Desert Wind* so that, if necessary, it can be delayed to accom-

modate UP's freight trains and still arrive on time.

Padded schedule or not, we're getting close to our destination now, and people start to gather up their belongings and chat excitedly. Everyone's peering out the windows to catch the first glimpse of Las Vegas, and finally we see it, the white, box-like hotels shimmering in the distance like some weird crystalline formation.

"Next stop, Las Vegas," booms the loudspeaker, "Las Vegas in two minutes," and we pull up to the station as orange sunset is spreading across the city and the shadows are growing long. When the doors of the train are thrown open and we step out onto the platform, the evening heat hits us like a wave, but not even the heat could bother us now. One middle-aged man in shorts and a checkered shirt says it all: walking on the platform alongside the train, he's unable to restrain himself, and let's out a high, blood-curdling rebel yell.

On the return trip, we pull away from the platform at 10:28 in the morning, nearly an hour and a half behind schedule, but the station is located at the edge of the city, and it isn't long before we're moving at top speed. The hotels and casinos recede slowly in the distance, until finally the whole concrete and neon oasis disappears like a mirage behind a sun-baked desert ridge.

The passengers are mostly quiet, as F. W. Dean told me they would be. No one admits to losing money, but their silence says it for them. Twenty minutes after leaving Las Vegas, we pass under Interstate 15, then angle away from it southwestward across the desert. Soon we are crossing a dry lake rimmed with jagged mountains. The sand of the lake bed is dazzling white in the morning sun, and beyond it, the desert plain seems to slope down and away forever. □

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Gordon Smith is a freelance writer based in San Diego, California. He has had articles in Westways, the Los Angeles Times, San Diego magazine and the San Diego Reader.



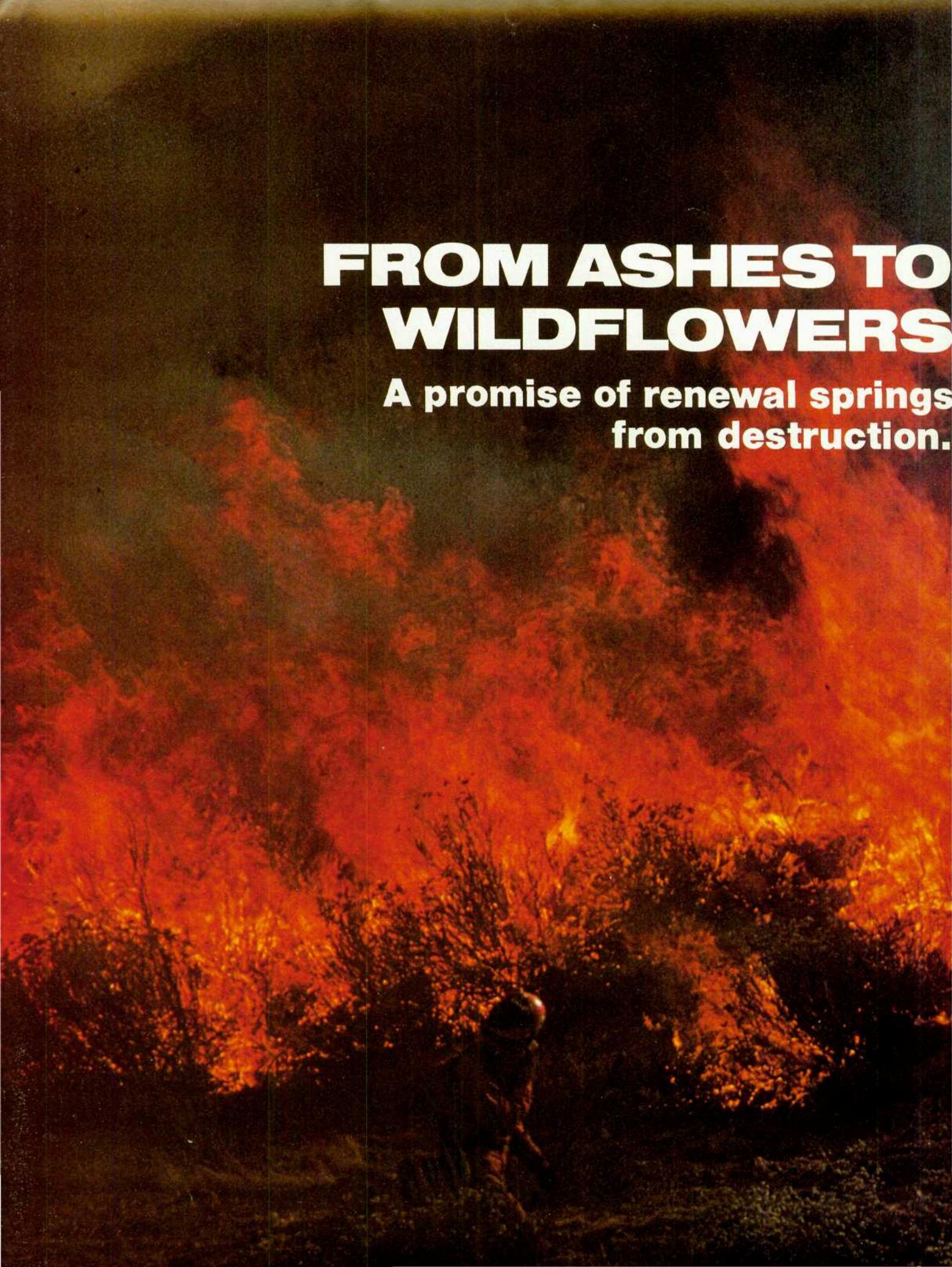
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Zeke Larsen is a freelance photographer from San Diego. He has done work for the San Diego Reader, Cycle World and Formula magazine.



# **FROM ASHES TO WILDFLOWERS**

**A promise of renewal springs  
from destruction.**





In recently burned areas, scarlet larkspurs may be more than six feet tall. They are one of the most spectacular of all fire-followers.



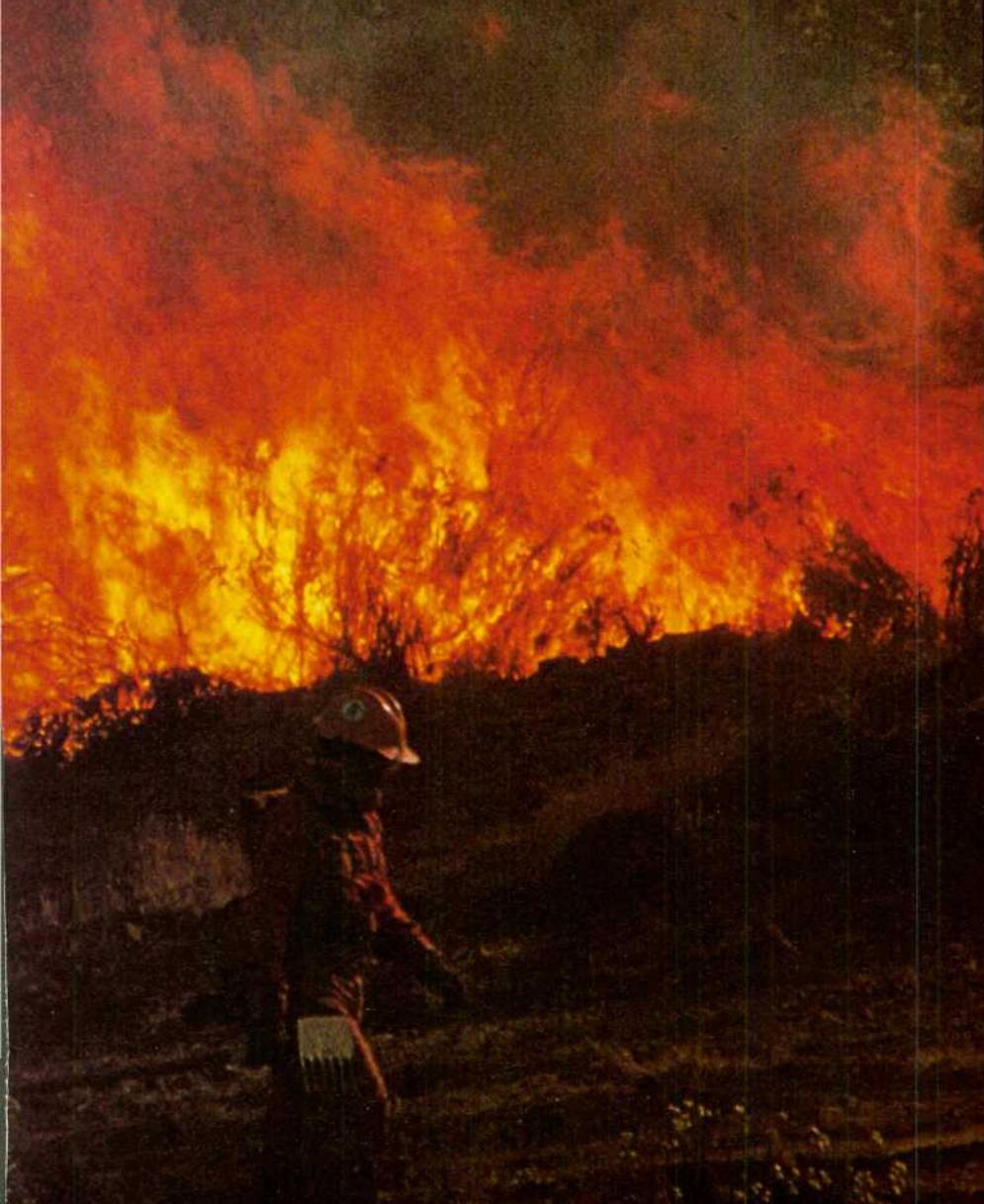
The western thistle is a striking spring wildflower in burned areas, very painful to the touch.



The vivid red Indian paintbrush often grows among resprouting shrubs and is partially parasitic on them.



The hillside monkeyflower is a common and showy wildflower after brush fires.



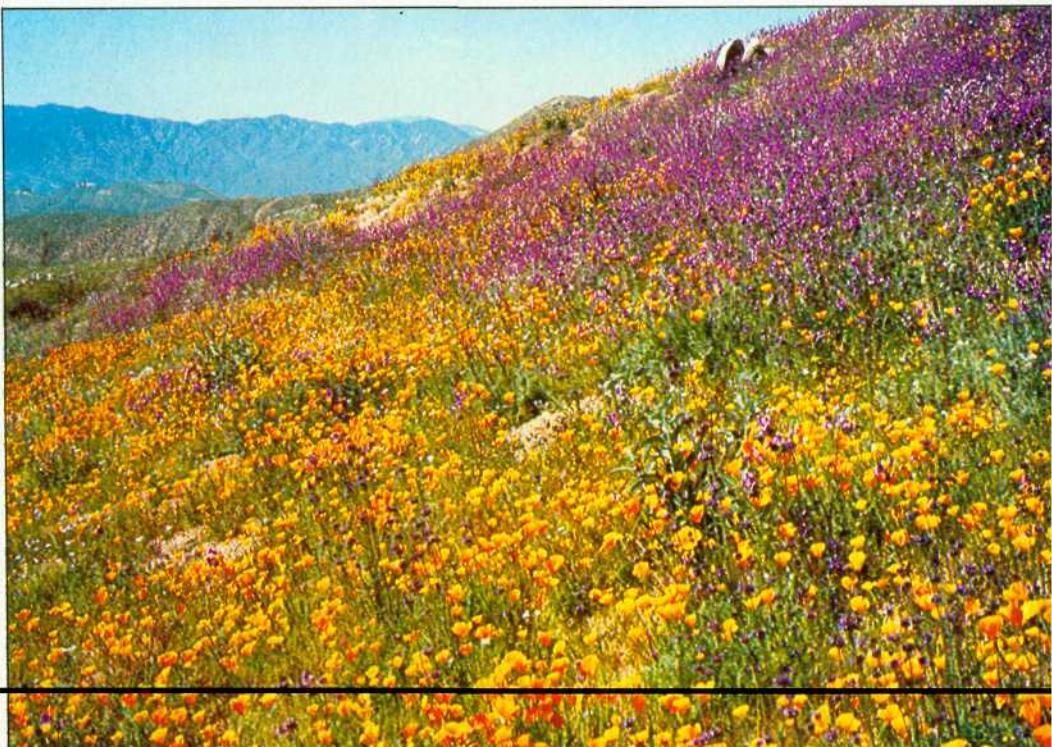
Brush fire out of control, a common occurrence on the dry hillsides of Southern California during summer and fall.

# WILDFLOWERS



Indian pink, a very sticky and showy fire-follower that is related to carnations.

Masses of orange California poppies and purple Canterbury bells cover a recently burned hillside.



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**Text and photographs by Wayne P. Armstrong**

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Most people view forest fires as a terrible loss of property and wildlife. I watched with horror and sadness as my parent's little mountain cabin burned to the ground. All the years of sweat and toil that went into building it were erased in minutes. Everything not consumed by the flames was stolen by looters, including a wonderful old potbellied stove. Knowing that wildflowers will thrive the next spring provides little consolation when you survey the smoldering remains, and reminisce about all the happy times you spent here with your loved ones. At the time of a personal disaster, it is difficult to rationalize about the beneficial effects of fire. Nonetheless, fire plays an integral role in nature's cycle and has been doing so long before humans inhabited this region.

**T**WAS A warm summer afternoon in the foothills of Southern California.

The air was still, with only the occasional calls of a wrentit and scrub jay in a nearby canyon. I looked across a distant ridge and saw a funnel of black smoke rising from the dry brush. As the late afternoon breezes rose, the smoke spread into a billowing cloud. The sun was soon blotted out. The air was filled with ashes and the distant sounds of sirens and air horns. This is a common occurrence on the parched hillsides of Southern California: a brush fire out of control, the beginning of one of nature's most fascinating cycles of death and renewal.

The day after the fire, I walked through the charred remains of a shrub forest. The smell of smoke and ashes was so strong that I coughed. In some places, the chalky gray ashes were ankle high. I left deep footprints that reminded me of photographs from the surface of the moon. The eerie silence was broken only by the hissing of smoldering stumps or a charred branch falling to the ground. Local gusts and small dust devils swirled the powdery ashes. Buzzards circled overhead. It was hard to imagine anything ever growing here again. However, this silent setting of grays and blacks was only a temporary phase in a complex series of events. Nature would completely restore the original vegetation.

Contrary to news media and pictorial propaganda showing a sad bear, fires are not entirely destructive. This broad generalization depends on several factors: the time interval between successive fires, the intensity and duration of the blaze, local weather conditions and time of year when the fire occurs, the frequency and

amount of winter rains following the fire season.

One of the most amazing phenomena in nature's miraculous recovery from fire is the brilliant display of wildflowers. The dazzling mass of color changes from orange to purple, red, or yellow as one kind of wildflower gradually fades and is replaced by another. The wildflowers may be so dense that it is impossible to take a step without crushing some of them. In addition to the tremendous density, there is often a remarkable diversity of species. For example, one canyon I studied in San

## **Botanists appropriately refer to the herbaceous wildflowers that appear in profusion after burns as fire- followers.**

Diego County contained more than 200 different species within one mile.

With the coming of winter rains, sprigs of grasses and annual wildflowers push through the rain-soaked, ashy soil. Within weeks, the barren gray and black slopes

become velvety hills of green. By this time, leafy branches have already grown from the bases of charred shrubs and deep-rooted stumps.

Botanists appropriately refer to the herbaceous wildflowers that appear in profusion after burns as fire-followers. There are hundreds of colorful fire-followers that predictably make their appearance in burned areas in the spring. One of the most common is white phacelia, a sticky annual. After a recent fire on the California-Mexico border, not a single white phacelia could be found on nearby unburned slopes, while in the burned areas it covered the ground. In other burned areas, I found equal numbers of related phacelias.

The scarcity of wildflowers in dense thickets of chaparral and their abundance after fire has been studied extensively in recent years. Fires occur once in every 10-40 years. Seeds of some wildflowers may lie dormant for decades and then germinate by the millions following a fire. Unfortunately, most of the reseeding campaigns to prevent erosion introduce weedy mustards and grasses, such as wild oats and ryegrass, which compete with and crowd out our colorful native soil binders. Fire breaks down the impervious seed coat of some wildflowers and allows them to absorb water. Other seeds will still not germinate unless endosperm tissue covering the embryonic root or radicle within the seed is removed. Heat or other unknown biochemical factors may be otherwise involved in breaking dormancy in some seeds. Chemicals present in the resinous foliage and fallen leaves of chaparral shrubs inhibit germination of wildflower seeds. This explains the large number of wildflowers that appear in recently cleared chaparral that has not been burned. It has also been shown that the burned remains of shrubs greatly stimulate the germination of certain seeds. Some, such as whispering bells, thrive in the ash and often grow much more vigorously than in soil without ash.

Studies show that many chaparral shrubs are actually rejuvenated by occasional fires, somewhat like pruning overgrown crowded plants. Many shrub species resprout from deep-rooted, underground stumps or burls. The new, vigorous growth has plenty of room and sunlight, plus abundant nutrients from the thick layer of ash carpeting the ground. Thickets of dense chaparral, with masses of dead branches and leaf litter that took decades to accumulate, are converted into rich ash within minutes. A common chaparral climbing vine, called wild cucumber, resprouts from an enormous, potato-like tuber that may weigh up to 60

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## WILDFLOWERS

pounds. Within three months of a fire, I have seen the twining vines covering burned shrubs, with small white flowers and huge, spiny green fruits that hang like ornaments from the blackened branches. Browsing deer frequent burned areas in search of the resprouting branches. The sprouts are more tender and palatable than the leathery leaves and stiff branches of impenetrable (and inaccessible) mature chaparral. Properly spaced fire intervals clear away accumulated dead branches in dense chaparral, and reduce the severity or intensity of a fire. This is the logic behind controlled burning procedures when wind and humidity factors are favorable.

**T**HERE ARE always some animal casualties during a brush fire. Larger mammals and birds often escape, although some become trapped or confused and frightened if their escape routes are blocked by housing developments. However, there are survivors who retreat into burrows or crevices in boulders where they are insulated from the heat. It is surprising to walk among charred

## Studies show that many chaparral shrubs are actually rejuvenated by occasional fires.

chaparral shrubs within days after a fire and find reptiles, fresh rodent burrows and the fresh tracks and droppings of coyote, rabbit and deer. Within 24 hours of a fire, I have seen numerous rattlesnakes, gopher snakes and colorful kingsnakes crawling over the black, ash-covered slopes.

Brush fires in Southern California typically occur during the drought months of summer and fall, the fire season. Often they are caused by people, either by accident or arson, but fires burned long before human habitation. Chaparral is tinder-dry by late summer. Many species are especially combustible due to their high content of volatile oils and resins. Lightning from

thunderstorms starts many fires in the higher mountains, and undoubtedly these fires raged for weeks before they burned out. Fanned by Santa Ana winds from the east, some fires swept all the way to the ocean. Early pioneers and explorers during the 1700s and 1800s reported many large fires burning out of control in the coastal foothills of California.

Indian tribes set fires to drive rabbits, deer and other game into the open. They also set fires to clear land for farming or harvesting wild roots and bulbs. Other hypotheses for the origin of natural fires are friction sparks from falling rocks and spontaneous combustion of plant debris. If you have ever stuck your hand into a pile of old grass clippings or compost, you know how hot it can get.

Some Forest Service fire records are quite unusual. In one case, a rancher was trying to burn his dead horse because he didn't want to dig a large grave. In another case, a man was trying to smoke bees out of a tree to harvest the honey.

The immediate benefits of a brush fire to the plant and animal inhabitants are not apparent to the casual observer. With sufficient winter and spring rains, charred hillsides become veritable wildflower gardens with acres of color. The air fills with the perfume of blossoms and the sound of bees.

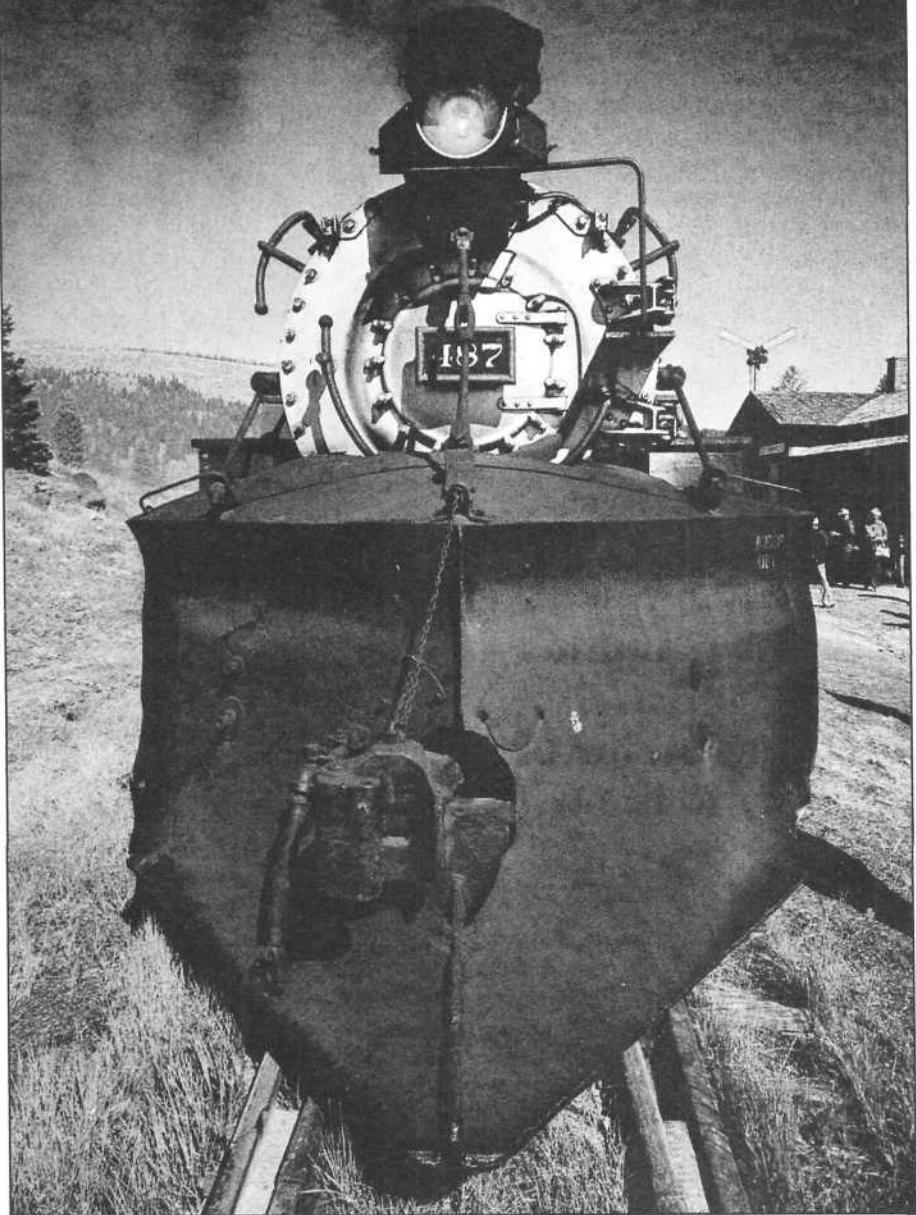
Plants have a remarkable tenacity in the face of fire, and through their dormant seeds and underground burls, roots, and bulbs, a new generation will gradually colonize the landscape. This remarkable regeneration after fire is not limited to chaparral, but also occurs in forested regions of the higher mountains. Less than a year after the eruption of Mount St. Helens, wildflowers and shrubs sprouted from the ash. Eventually the slopes will again be forested, although it may take many centuries, depending upon local volcanic activity.

Perhaps one day we will fully understand the role of fire in the perpetuation of native vegetation, and the miraculous transition of ashes to wildflowers.

*Wayne P. Armstrong teaches biology and botany at Palomar College, San Marcos, California. He conducts ecology field trips to the mountain and desert areas of Southern California. He also writes articles for Environment Southwest (San Diego Society of Natural History), Fremontia (California Native Plant Society) and Pacific Discovery (California Academy of Sciences).*



*Locomotive 487 rests at Cumbres Pass while the train's brakes are checked.*



CRADOC BAGSHAW

# High Country Railroading

By Diane Hlava

**A**COLUMN OF black smoke and the mournful cry of the whistle beckon me. I round the corner of the depot. There on the narrow tracks sits locomotive number 487, gently panting steam. An anachronism in this age of supersonic travel and instant communication, engine 487 is perfectly suited to its job. Having given more than 50 years of faithful service on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, it now ferries tourists across the rugged mountains for the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad.

People come from all over the United States to ride one of the last survivors of the age of steam-powered trains. Some are railroad buffs, others are interested in history. A considerable number ride out of curiosity: They have never traveled by train. A few seek the glories of fishing and backpacking in the high country; the train stops to pick up or discharge hikers at several places along the route. Still others, like me, ride for reflection. Preferring rail to any other kind of travel, I'm eager to begin the trip across 64 miles of circuitous track from Antonito, Colorado, to Chama, New Mexico. After the arid environs of

Santa Fe and Albuquerque, the mountain scenery will be a pleasant change.

Engine 487 whistles again. My husband Ed, friends Helen and Cradoc Bagshaw and I board the Colorado Limited. Running two trains, one from the eastern terminus, Antonito, to the halfway point, Osier, and one from the western railhead, Chama, to Osier, the Cumbres and Toltec offers a round trip excursion from either town. A one-way trip that requires a change of train at Osier is also available. We've opted for the one-way ride.

We find our seats in car E, but because of the light passenger load, we can sit anywhere. We choose an empty car and settle back for the trip. Functional is the best way to describe the passenger cars. No velvet-draped 19th-Century accommodations on this line. Instead, these are converted 1903 boxcars. Equipped with molded plastic seats and moveable acrylic windows, the cars are partially open on the sides. I relax as the train pulls out of the Antonito station.

The train bumps along slowly and crosses U.S. Highway 285 as it heads southwest across the San Luis Valley. We will not cross another road until we reach Cumbres Pass, late in the afternoon. We're traveling at about 15 miles an hour; the noise from the wheels raises conversation to a shout. This is too much effort; we'd rather look at the scenery. Sagebrush, chamisa and native grasses, golden in the early autumn light, stretch north and south. As the air warms, we peel off parkas and sweaters. We enjoy clean clear air between blasts of coal smoke from the engine stack. Ed and Cradoc wander off to take pictures of the scenery. Helen and I adjust to the rhythmic motion of the car, rolling with the jolts and bumps. We catch a glimpse of an antelope, startled by the engine's whistle. It bounds away from the tracks. In a few minutes Ed and Cradoc return, urging us to join them in the open gondola car at the rear of the train. We trek to the rear, happy to leave the din of the box car.

The train climbs into mesa country, and the view is panoramic. Smoke and the smells of the surrounding vegetation fill the air. The track curves and the entire train becomes visible ahead. To the north, south and west extend the San Juan Mountains, a branch of the Rockies. To the east lies tiny Antonito. As we climb higher, aspen and pine become more common, and as far as I can see there are no fences or other evidence of human presence. I imagine the land looks as it did

# Railroading

when the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad crews began constructing the track in 1880.

I feel very much at home as the train chugs around the many bends in the track, following the topography. The only sounds come from the train. At nearly every curve, the engineer sounds the whistle, lending an air of urgency to the trip. Perched on the side of the mountain, the first structures since Antonito come into view. This is Sublette, the first stop. Sublette is one of many section camps that housed the men who maintained the tracks. In its prime, Sublette bustled with activity, its population swollen to about 100 by loggers and businessmen. Only three original buildings stand today. Still visible in a few places, logging roads wind through the surrounding area. A bunk house of chinked logs is the oldest building on the line. Peeling paint and warped timbers tell of long, hard winters. At 9,000 feet, aspens cover the slopes. In the late September sun their brilliant orange, red and gold leaves shimmer and shine.

Underway again after taking on water, the train climbs higher; I watch hawks soar. The solitude is comforting, although I'm with a group. We are quiet, enjoying this time to be alone. Marking our progress at intervals of a mile, posts declare the distance from Denver. Milepost 311.30 along the Toltec Gorge marks the entrance to the first tunnel on the line. Called Mud Tunnel, it's 349 feet long. The interior is completely timbered. Facing the inside with timber was necessary to shore up the soft material through which the tunnel passes, but the wood makes the tunnel something of a fire hazard. In the past, sparks from the locomotive started fires that smoldered for days. The remoteness of the Cumbres and Toltec

line makes the tunnel a favorite location of film companies.

Once out of the tunnel, we overlook the Rio de los Piños, 600 feet below the tracks. A tame ride at less than 10 miles an hour, anything much faster would be hair-raising. The terrain is rugged. At Phantom Curve, a wall of rock rises straight up. This curve is so named because passengers and crew traveling at night reported that the canyon wall reflected the train's lights, creating eerie images and ghostlike shapes.

Struck by the beauty of the wilderness area, most passengers travel in near silence, enjoying private thoughts and emotions. As we near Osier, Colorado, the

a Mexican combination plate—is quickly devoured. There's just enough time to take a few pictures before four whistle blasts call us to board the train. During lunch, the crews have been busy switching engine 487, the locomotive from the westbound Colorado Limited, to the back of the eastbound New Mexico Express. Like the engines, we switched trains after lunch. The engine that hauled the New Mexico Express to Osier is coupled to the rear of the Colorado Limited. Because Osier's location provides just enough room for a short span of double track and a siding, but not enough space for a roundhouse, the engines are switched for the return trips.

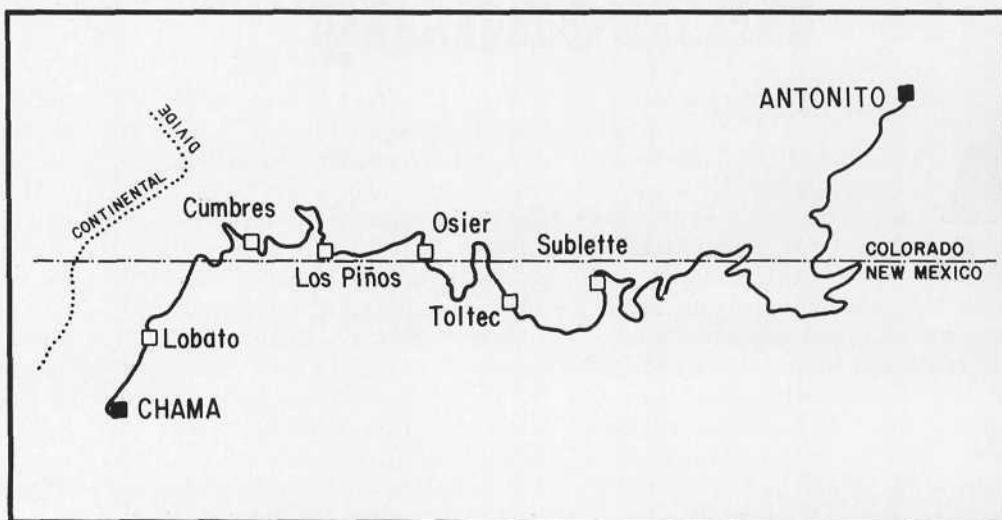
**At nearly every curve, the engineer sounds the whistle, lending an air of urgency to the trip.**

lunch stop, conversation picks up. Built on a knoll, Osier looks southwest over the Rio de los Piños. At this point, the name is something of a misnomer; the River of the Pines flows past few pines. A forest fire raged west of Osier in 1879; the trees are only slowly returning. I see that the New Mexico Express, up the four-percent grade from Chama, has just arrived. Osier is the halfway point on the trip; after lunch, most passengers will retrace the morning's route to their point of origin. We will change trains here, riding the New Mexico Express to Chama.

Lunch—a hot, barbecued beef buffet or

**J**OINING A new group of people on the New Mexico Express, we continue our westward journey. The terrain changes from steep slopes and deep canyons to a gently rolling countryside, covered with grass and an occasional stand of trees. Cattle dot the hills and dirt tracks wind through the area. Preferring the open air, we try riding in the gondola car, but in addition to having no seats, now the car is directly behind the engine. After a few minutes, the eye-burning, acrid-smelling smoke is too much for Helen and me, so we retreat to the somewhat sheltered environment of the semi-enclosed cars. Ed and Cradoc, blessed with more stamina (and eyeglasses), remain in the gondola a while, then move the length of the train, taking pictures of the terrain. Many more people are riding the New Mexico Express than rode this morning's train from Antonito. Seeing so many families enjoying the ride is an encouraging sign for the survival of this scenic line as well as for modern rail travel.

Later, the train crosses the Rio de los Piños on the Cascade Trestle and I look down a frightening 137 feet; this trestle has no guard rails. The span is 409 feet long and has been in use since 1889. The afternoon begins to turn cold, so Helen and I





*With the locomotive that brought us to Osier coupled to the New Mexico Express, we continue our southwestern journey through the San Juan Mountains.*

don our parkas and scarves. Rolling on, watching the shadows lengthen, the existence of this wild land is incongruous in the context of the 20th Century. For me, the land and the train are a means of spiritual rejuvenation, a way to put my city life in perspective.

At the Los Piños water tank, we stop to take on water before the climb to Cumbres Pass. Winter snows are heavy in this high valley; for several miles, the remnants of snow sheds have been visible. Blocking traffic at the summit, Cumbres Pass, the train crosses New Mexico Highway 17. At the sight of the road and the automobiles, I realize the end of the trip is near. How nice it would be, I fantasize, to lodge the night in a railroad hotel in Chama and continue on to Durango or Silverton tomorrow. A blast of cold air brings me back to reality. I'm content to stay on the train during our 20-minute stop. The crew prudently tests the brakes before beginning the steep descent into Chama.

Working harder than it has so far today, engine 487 strains as it, and the brakes, hold back the train during the downhill run. Traveling at less than 10 miles per hour, the train descends four vertical feet for every 100 feet of track. This is a steep descent, one that makes it hard to control

## The train climbs into mesa country, and the view is panoramic.

### Ideas on planning your own rail trip.

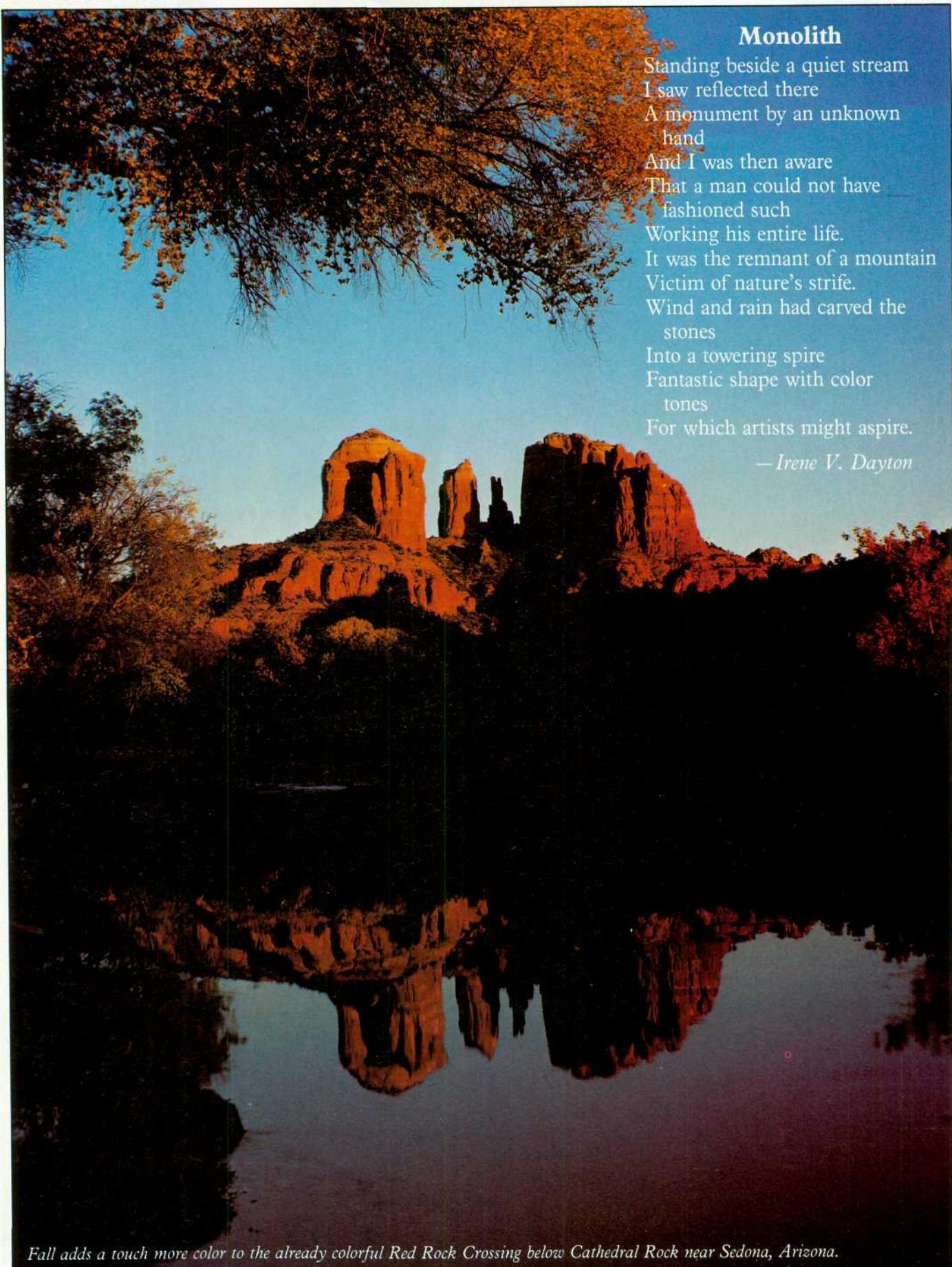
Planning to experience the entire rail trip is worth the effort. To enjoy the 64-mile Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad route, we traveled in two cars from Santa Fe to Chama via U.S. Highway 84, (see map) a distance of about 107 miles. At Chama we parked one car at the depot and took New Mexico State Highway 17 over Cumbres and La Manga Passes 48 miles to Antonito, Colorado. Boarding the train in Antonito, we disembarked at Chama, and once again drove Highway 17 to Antonito. There we picked up the other car and traveled the 110 miles from An-

tonito to Santa Fe via Highway 285. Travel time from Santa Fe to Chama is about three hours. The route over Cumbres Pass takes about 50 minutes, and the time from Antonito to Santa Fe is approximately two and one half hours. □

tonito to Santa Fe via Highway 285. Travel time from Santa Fe to Chama is about three hours. The route over Cumbres Pass takes about 50 minutes, and the time from Antonito to Santa Fe is approximately two and one half hours.

The Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad operates from about mid-June to mid-October. Reservations are a must, as passenger loads are hard to gauge. Trains leave Chama, New Mexico and Antonito, Colorado, Friday through Tuesday at 10 a.m. and return to the point of origin by 5 p.m. For more information, contact Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, P.O. Box 7889, Chama, NM 87520, or call (505) 756-2151.

# TRACES IN THE SAND



## Monolith

Standing beside a quiet stream  
I saw reflected there  
A monument by an unknown  
hand  
And I was then aware  
That a man could not have  
fashioned such  
Working his entire life.  
It was the remnant of a mountain  
Victim of nature's strife.  
Wind and rain had carved the  
stones  
Into a towering spire  
Fantastic shape with color  
tones  
For which artists might aspire.

— Irene V. Dayton

Fall adds a touch more color to the already colorful Red Rock Crossing below Cathedral Rock near Sedona, Arizona.



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*From watering hole to stopover  
between Salt Lake City and San  
Bernardino to the sparkling city of  
today—a short history of how the  
glitter got there.*

## Lady Las Vegas

By Virginia A. Greene

**M**Y DEARS, have you heard? She's at it again! Puttin' on airs, I call it. Sprucin' up, paintin' her face, flashin' that 'pleased t' meetcha' look. Why, it's a scandal, that's what it is! And at her age. But then, it's not surprisin', I suppose, when you think of her beginnings. Everyone knows where she comes from, who her folks were."

"Some of the best, I've heard."

"The best! Why, my dear, they were the rag-tag of the lot! Drifters. Loose on the desert. Lookin' for heaven knows what!"

So they were, those kinfolk of that Lady with the pizazz, that Las Vegas: a parade of rusty, crusty characters. Earthy folk, who snaked their way across the flat, parched landscape and paused for a moment beside a desert watering hole where dragonflies and hummingbirds darted among the reeds.

Drifters? Not a bit of it. They knew where they were headed. They called it westering, or they called it surveying, or prospecting, soldiering, homesteading, railroading, or trapping.

"Well, it just isn't seemly (at her age, too) to be always lookin' for a good time. Why, it's positively . . . naughty . . . That's what it is—naughty!"

Las Vegas, Nevada. Naughty? Risqué? Full of excitement and youthful vigor?

"Maybe it's just plain optimism, or success. She's come a long way, you know. Waited a long time. And she's hung on, too, until she finally made it."

"But, my dear, she's just a little interloper, tryin' to pass herself off as . . . as . . . important!"

She is important, this Las Vegas, this Lady with a past. The Lady with enough glitter and energy to draw millions to her

door each year, the Lady with enough clout to sway the state and federal legislatures.

Oh, she's a coquette, all right, a bit racy with her fancy skirts, painted cheeks and brassy ways. She has a cadence, a beat, a rhythm. She moves to it. There in the desert of southern Nevada, she welcomes them all—the tourists and ranchers, schoolteachers and scientists, clerks and gamblers who come to her doors each year.

It's always been that way. Folk have always come to Las Vegas—even 'way back before there was much there.

They came on foot, skirting mesquite and raising little puffs of dirt as they scuffed along.

They came on horseback, in wagons and

**They came on  
foot, on  
horseback, in  
wagons, those  
kinfolk of the flirt.**

by mule train through the blinding glare, watching dust devils whirl across the lonely trail before them.

Moving.

Westering.

The route was hard, and it was long. They came, those rusty, crusty characters, across the remote desert valley at the edge of the Great Basin, and at the foot of the serrated mountain range they halted. They



laid down their packs and their pickaxes and Bibles, and they sat down to rest in the grass beside the pools of gushing water.

The place was known as Las Vegas (The Meadows). It was an oasis in what was commonly thought of as the longest, crookedest, most arduous pack mule route in the history of America.

Las Vegas remains an oasis, a watering hole for a continuing parade of colorful

folded, so went Las Vegas, with its beginnings rooted in the ancient culture of the Anasazi, those early Indian farmers whose lifestyle was distinguished by large communal buildings, embellished by an elaborate complex of arts and crafts and by a rich ceremonial life.

**W**HEN THE Anasazi left the area in the 12th Century, neighboring Paiutes came to live off the land. They lived in temporary encampments around the springs of Las Vegas, hunting, gathering and foraging along the banks of the Muddy and Virgin Rivers, and in other well-watered places.

Then the white man came, shouldered aside the Indians and made way for a parade of westering trappers, traders, government explorers, freighters, missionaries, gold rushers and other overlanders bound for California.

They watched duststorms spawn dazzling sunsets; watched the sun sear the rocky, sandy landscape with a pounding fury in summer. They endured the cold wind of winter as it raged from higher mountain ranges to the west; they experienced the miracle of April wildflowers decorating rainwashed arroyos with a brief, rarefied magic. Some stayed; most moved on to answer a call beyond the mountains.

In 1776, Francisco Garces and Spanish missionaries of the Franciscan Order approached the Las Vegas region to open a trail between New Mexico and California. They found too many hardships and turned back toward the east and the south.

The first whites of definite record to cross the southern Nevada deserts were American fur men. Jedediah Smith and a brigade of 15 trappers in 1826 followed the Virgin River to its mouth, crossed and rode along the Colorado River until they reached the future site of Needles, then turned and headed directly west to the Mission San Gabriel near Los Angeles. Significantly, Smith's trek opened the way from the central interior west to the Pacific Ocean. It was along this route that the Lady's kinfolk would trek for a century and a half. It was at The Meadows that the sunstruck, weary travelers found rest and water.

The Old Spanish Trail, as it came to be called, was the primary commercial connection between Santa Fe and Los Angeles. Traders used the route more than fur trappers, who in 1829 organized themselves into caravans for the three-month trip.

John C. Fremont rode to the springs in 1844 and fixed Las Vegas permanently on the map when he published it in his great report, detailing his second and most



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*Top, Las Vegas in her early beginnings.  
Above, 1910 and she's building up. Shown here is downtown Fremont Street.*

ture of the bizarre and the beautiful, of nature in the raw, of the ultimate in sophistication. It has the distinction, also, of having developed in the most predictable manner, this painted Lady with the youthful vigor. As American history un-

characters. They come from all over the world, winging in on the great multicolored planes, arriving by bus, train, motorcycle and auto from anywhere in the United States. They arrive each year by the millions—12 million, more or less—and they seem, in their contemporary manner, not out of place in the long parade.

The place has long been a curious mix-

## LADY LAS VEGAS

notable exploration of the West.

Indians and trappers, traders and explorers, emigrants, horse rustlers, robbers and soldiers and traffickers in the Indian slave market beat deep ruts through the powdery earth.

The oasis at Las Vegas Springs, sometimes called Big Springs, had cottonwoods and willows shading the springs, which gushed with a force strong enough to keep a swimming man afloat and supplied warm, palatable water for drinking and bathing. Close by was a wealth of mesquite for firewood; there was plenty of grass for stock. Meadows extended for several miles, marking the limits reached by the spring waters as they spread across the valley floor.

Wagons began to roll.

Mormons led companies of wagons south from Salt Lake City and west to California along the Old Spanish Trail, finally called the Mormon Trail. Trail guides Jefferson Hunt and Elijah Ward piloted their charges for a flat rate of 10 dollars per wagon to Los Angeles, camping at the springs in the desert. Very late in 1849, renowned pathfinder Major Howard Egan spent a few days there, then moved on.

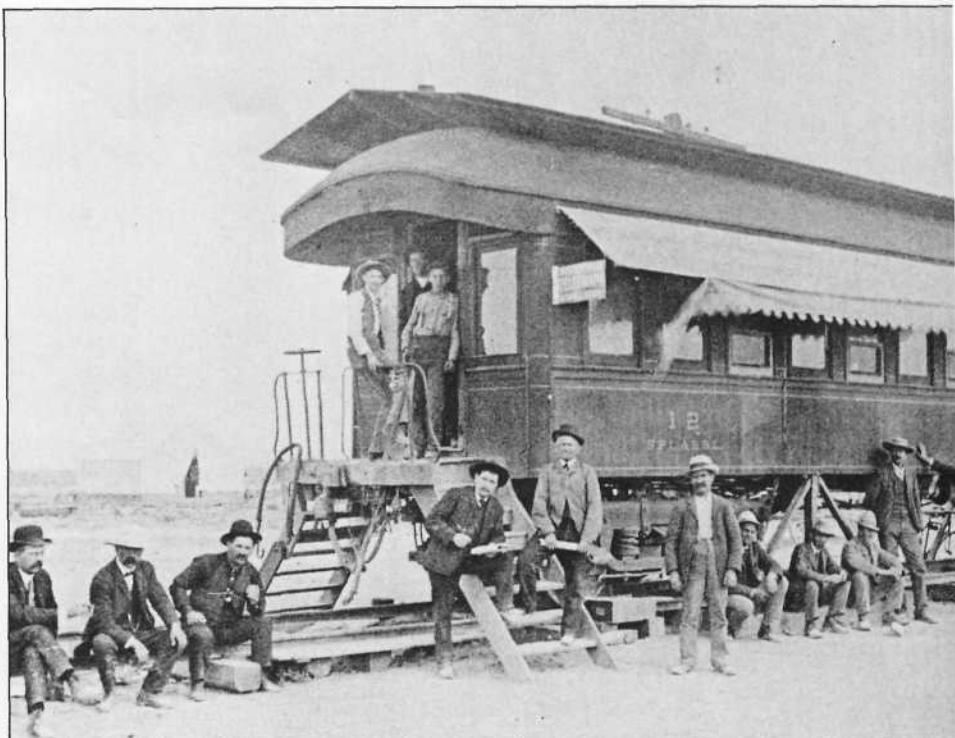
The parade of characters stopping at the springs took on greater variety when Mormons and miners stepped onto the trail.

Most of those who traveled the corridor to the Pacific in the mid-1800s were Mormons, who soon turned their hand to building settlements from Salt Lake to San Bernardino.

In 1855, a group of 30 missionaries, headed by William Bringhurst, established a colony at Las Vegas to convert the Indians to the Mormon way of life. On June 14, 1855, the missionaries began to lay the foundation of the first settlement at The Meadows, which they would occupy for two years, and which was located about three miles below the springs. It was usually referred to as the Mormon Fort, later as the Las Vegas Ranch, and for 50 years was the heart of Las Vegas.

Miners and short-term entrepreneurs made quick trips to the site of the abandoned fort, but it wasn't until 1865, when Octavius Decatur Gass reoccupied the fort and put in crops, that Las Vegas became a permanent settlement. Gass began farming and cattle ranching and the development of the Las Vegas Valley was begun. The Lady was coming into her own.

Gass was active in Arizona political affairs, for part of Nevada fell within those territorial boundaries, and he raised a strong voice in decisions affecting the new



*Top, the temporary depot, 1905.  
Above, later that same year construction was finished on the first permanent depot.*

territory.

A great many people had passed through the Las Vegas country; now many stayed. Prospectors fanned across the desert and into the mountains; the army maintained a post at The Meadows between 1867 and

1869; Gass developed part of the valley, then left for Southern California in 1881 and sold the ranch to Archibald and Helen Stewart who, at the time of Helen's death in 1926, deeded 10 acres to the government for use by the Paiute Indians. They still occupy the area, directed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

They came on foot, on horseback, in wagons, those kinfolk of the flit.

15, 1905, to several hundred eager bidders. The building of the town began a day later.

Tents went up first, "mansions of airy canvas," said one reporter, then shacks, and within weeks Las Vegas had lost its sleepy, pastoral, backwater character and had become a boomtown in the desert. Saloons—The Gem, Arizona Club, Red Onion Club, The Arcade—grew fastest; flush times had arrived, spawned by great new silver and gold mining fields to the south. Rail spurs brought business in and meant the end of nearly 50 years of difficult, isolated pioneering in a hostile, hard land.

In 1909, Clark County—named for Senator Clark—was separated from Lincoln County and Las Vegas became the county seat. Two years later, the town was incorporated, but remained a pretty small place until the automobile revolution reached southern Nevada after World War I.

The city was a major stopping place between Salt Lake City and San Bernardino. Hotels, restaurants, garages and general stores appeared. By 1930, the census reported 5,165 people in residence.

The town was standing in the wings of yet another major production: Hoover Dam was about to put the century-old water-hole into a new role.

The "greatest dam in the world" was dedicated by President Roosevelt on September 31, 1935, and with it came flush times for Las Vegas. The rest of the country suffered the Depression, but Las Vegas enjoyed the benefits of 5,000 new dam employees and their huge monthly

## Rail spurs brought business in and meant the end of nearly 50 years of difficult, isolated pioneering in a hostile, hard land.

payroll.

A further boom came in 1931, when the Nevada legislature returned legalized gambling to Nevada after an absence of 22 years. Residency for divorce was lowered to six weeks, repeal of prohibition came in 1933, and the entrepreneurs of the entertainment industry began to ply their trade with a Midas touch.

The dam town became a club and show town. The Lady slid into her high-

heeled slippers, piled up her hair, rouged her cheeks and lips. She climbed into the driver's seat of a fast Packard roadster and rode to The Meadows—the first night club and casino, featuring a "spectacular review." Other clubs were built in quick succession.

In the summer of 1940, Tommy Hull opened the first luxury hotel—El Rancho Vegas—despite taunts that he was crazy for building two and a half miles south of town in the midst of sand, greasewood and mesquite. Tommy Hull had something. The beginning of the famed Las Vegas Strip. Tourists. Show people. Gamblers. Kinfolk.

Nellis Air Force Base was begun in 1941 and a \$150-million magnesium refinery plant went into production in 1942, bringing huge payrolls and spending power to Las Vegas. Millions of dollars went into permanent housing, schools and local industry, and it wasn't long before the Greater Las Vegas area—out there beyond the bright lights—was called home by 330,000 people, more than half of the population of the entire state.

Las Vegas had everything: outdoor living in a perfect desert setting, plenty of water for power and recreation, stupendous entertainment and a strictly-controlled gaming industry. It became the glamor resort and gambling capital of the world.

The town has kept its Old West touch, but with its crystal chandeliers and flocked wallpaper, its padded leather and polished mahogany, the baroque interiors and hearty oil paintings of simpering nudes, it is a far cry from its rude beginnings at the old watering hole among the willows and cottonwoods.

Splendiferous she is. Hostess to millions. The darling of all who parade through, who enjoy the show and who live their lives where dragonflies and hummingbirds once darted among the reeds.

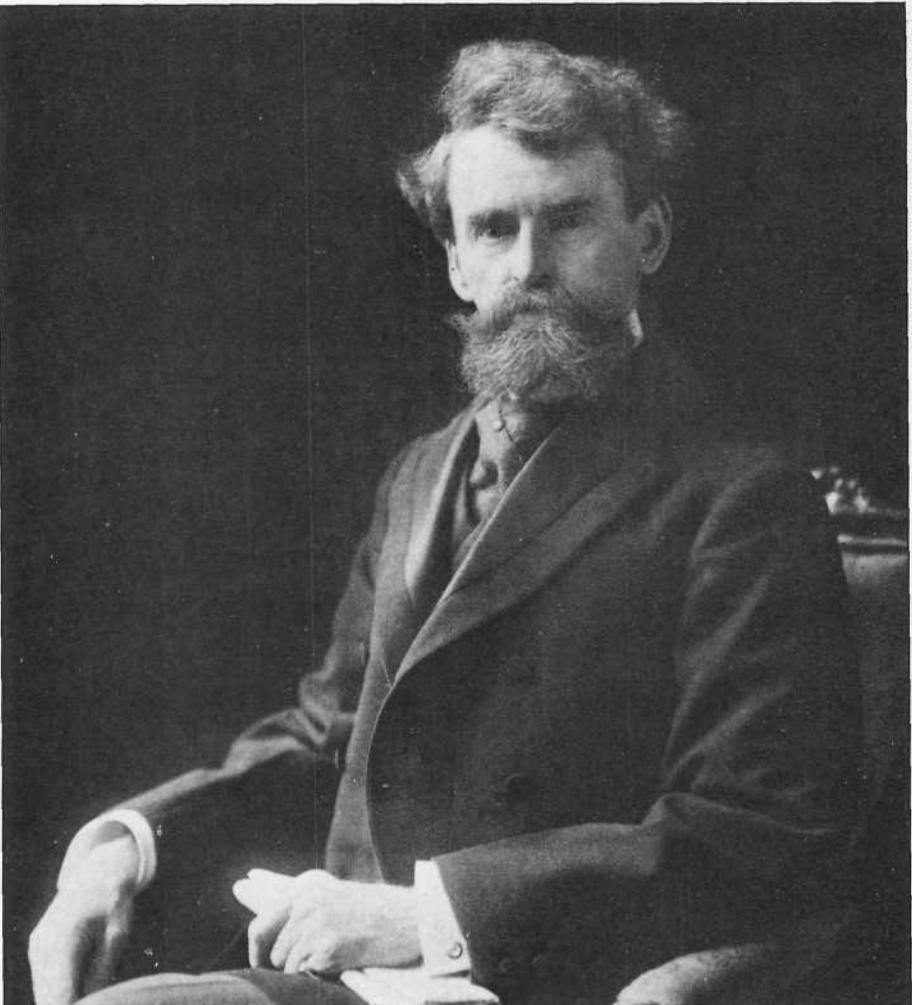
Las Vegas. That girl-about-town. That Lady with the youthful vigor, out for a good time, daughter of those rusty, crusty characters who sat down to rest beside the pools of gushing water. □

Virginia Greene, native Arizonan, adopted Californian, has spent much of her lifetime exploring the deserts, mountains, canyonlands and waterways of the Southwest. Three years ago, she marked the last of the English theme papers, turned in the final grade report and moved with her husband from Palm Springs to Pacific Grove, California, where she works as a novelist and free-lance writer.



On January 30, 1905, through the efforts of Senator W. A. Clark, who was ranching in the valley, the historic Mormon Trail between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles became a route for rails. Las Vegas entered another era.

After one false start, the railroad company chose a location on the east side of the tracks, where it planned the Las Vegas townsite. Lots were sold at auction on May



COURTESY MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

United States and beyond, Clark considered Montana his residence for many years. He helped draft the state's first constitution and served as its United States Senator. His stately three-story home in Butte, completely restored and known as Copper King Mansion, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Well-groomed and gracious, Clark entertained lavishly. With his wife Kate, elegantly attired in a Paris gown and jewels, standing at his side, he welcomed guests to regal parties in the third-floor ballroom of his mansion. With such a flair for entertaining, it's a pity Clark is not alive today to see the lucrative industry entertainment has become in what was, only three-quarters of a century ago, his Las Vegas townsite.

In 1905, Las Vegas was a railroad town. To Clark, it was merely a part of his far-reaching plan to build a railroad from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles. The story goes that he bought the old Las Vegas Rancho as a place to service his trains as they crossed the desert; that he divided the property into lots and moved in his employees, creating the town of Las Vegas. That's pretty close to the truth.

Clark built the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad entirely with his own resources. No bonds were sold, no stocks issued. It was unprecedented in the history of railroad construction. It is said that Clark paid his Mormon construction crews cash, that he paid cash for the right-of-way, that he paid cash for his engines and cars. With his wealth, it is quite possible.

Construction of the Salt Lake Route was the kind of challenge the scrappy little Irishman loved—he was squared off against the mighty Union Pacific, which had the distinction of being the only transcontinental railroad in the nation at that time. Union Pacific had been considering a line between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles for some time, held back primarily by financial problems.

Influential citizens at both ends of the proposed line were promoting the linkage. Newspapers were having a heyday with the idea.

At this point, Clark stepped in, right under UP's nose, with plans of his own. With typical foresight, he'd already bought the Los Angeles Terminal Railway at one end of the planned line and the Utah and California Railroad at the other end. The latter was a railroad on paper only, as it had yet to be built between Salt Lake City and the Nevada border.

At one point Clark, who was considered ruthless by his detractors, was accused of obtaining the two lines and moving to connect them merely as a threat to UP, to get

# William Andrews Clark

*The story of the man,  
the flamboyance and the railroad  
that put Las Vegas on the map.*

---

By Roberta Donovan

---

AS VEGAS, sparkling fun capital of the world, owes its beginning to a red-bearded Irishman from Butte, Montana.

For all its importance today, Las Vegas was a minor enterprise for flamboyant, multi-millionaire William Andrews Clark. Among his international holdings were some of the world's largest copper, coal, silver and zinc mines, several railroads, a bronze foundry, coffee and sugar ranches, a powder and explosives plant, a priceless art collection, banks, newspapers, waterworks, street-car systems and electric light companies.

Few men have accomplished as much as the slightly-built Clark. A penniless school teacher in Missouri, he began freighting supplies to mining camps and eventually amassed several fortunes. At the turn of the century, Clark was known as "one of the 10 men who own America." His income was reputed to be \$17 million a month in the final years of the 19th Century.

Clark once refused an offer of \$25 million for one of his mines—he said he had so much money he wouldn't know what to do with any more.

Though his interests spanned the

better freight rates for his copper shipments. Denying this vigorously, Clark used well-planned publicity in major newspapers to gain public support.

He moved fast to clear obstacles to construction of the line, changing the charter of the Utah and California Railroad so it could operate outside Utah, pushing a bill through the Nevada Assembly to give out-of-state lines equality with local ones. He even acquired legal control of a stretch of railroad grade that belonged to Union Pacific.

The battle erupted, and was dubbed the Clark-Harriman War (Harriman being the head of UP).

In a frenzy, the two companies began construction, outbidding each other for available labor. Wages soared to unheard-of rates. Laborers switched allegiance with the rising pay scale. Rivalry was so intense that fights broke out between crews.

Eventually, a truce was declared. In 1902, Union Pacific sold a portion of its lines to Clark, who in turn sold half-ownership in his railroad to UP. The remainder of the line was completed jointly by Clark and the UP. The line from the east reached Las Vegas in 1904.

Although Clark purchased the townsite much earlier, there was little development of Las Vegas before the actual arrival of the railroad. As the line approached, a com-

Vegas and, therefore, not included in Las Vegas proper. Clark solved the dilemma, announcing that his lots would be sold to the highest bidders.

The community prospered. So did the railroad, but not without difficulty. The major problem was water—either too little to operate the steam engines, or too much in the form of floods.

When the Salt Lake to Los Angeles route was first completed, a passenger coach parked on a siding served as the Las Vegas depot. Before long, an imposing mission-style structure was built at the head of Fremont Street, evidence of the railroad's importance to the community.

In 1909, extensive railroad yards were constructed. They were expected to employ 400 or more people and housing was scarce in the brash, young town. The railroad formed a subsidiary, the Las Vegas Land & Water Company, to undertake the task of constructing as many as 120 concrete block houses. To facilitate the project, tracks were laid in the alleys and the railroad delivered building supplies directly to the sites. The company also furnished water to the town's residents until 1954.

In 1921, when Clark was 82 years old, he sold his interest in the railroad to the Union Pacific, thus ending that portion of a remarkable one-man dynasty. He died four years later.

The county where Las Vegas is situated is named Clark, a tribute to the part he played in establishing the community.

Speculation is futile, but it is interesting to contemplate whether or not Las Vegas might ever have come into being, had it not been for the feisty little Irishman and the railroad he was building.

Clark has been called Las Vegas' first gambler, but that is not true. A shrewd businessman, Clark knew exactly what he was doing when he purchased the little desert oasis and turned it into a town. The wheel of fortune had little to do with it.

Even Clark might be surprised, if he could see today how his desert community has blossomed into a bustling metropolis, with a flamboyance not unlike his own.

## **Clark knew exactly what he was doing when he purchased the little desert oasis and turned it into a town.**

munity of tents and false-front buildings sprang up. Soon there were 15 saloons to quench the desert-dry thirst of railroad workers and residents.

In the mushrooming construction camp, residents were warned to watch out for unsavory characters, while one of the town's infant newspapers, fearing an influx of more riffraff, advised people of scant means to stay away.

Even before the first train rolled into town, land developers were capitalizing on the community's rosy future, selling lots at inflated prices. The purchaser's pride of ownership turned to disillusionment when they learned the land they'd bought was not part of Clark's original Rancho Las

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*Roberta Donovan, a native of Lewistown, Montana, is a full-time photojournalist. A former editor for 12 years of the Lewistown News-Argus, she has had two books and numerous articles published, is a regular correspondent for the two largest newspapers in Montana and the Associated Press, has won over 100 state and national writing awards and in 1968, was voted the Montana Press Woman of the Year. We welcome her writing in Desert magazine.*

# CALENDAR

September 1 - September 30

## Arizona

**Sept. 19-21:** Arcosanti celebrates the 100th anniversary of the birth of Pierre Teilhard deChardin and the 10th anniversary of the ongoing Arcosanti project. There will be a wide variety of nationally and internationally regarded performing and visual artists and musicians. Also experts from the U.S. and abroad discussing Teilhard, aesthetics, science, history, theology, philosophy, politics, economics and person. For additional information, contact Arcosanti Events, 6433 Doubletree Rd., Scottsdale, AZ 85253.

## California

**Sept. 1-28:** *Images of the Spirit World*, a major new exhibit assembling representations of rock art in a variety of media is being featured at the San Diego Museum of Man. The exhibit is a collection of art works dealing with rock art: paintings, photos, reproductions of rock art and pastel drawings. The show will also feature a slide exhibit. For more information, call (714) 239-2001.

**Sept. 4-6:** The seventh annual Gem & Mineral Show, *Treasures of the Earth*, will be held at the Parkway Plaza Mall, El Cajon, CA. Hours: Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Dealer space is open. For information, contact Horace Scott, (714) 443-8272.

**Sept. 19-20:** Fossils for Fun Society, Inc., will present its Second Annual Paleo-Panorama at Country Club Centre, El Camino & Watt Avenues, Sacramento, CA. Fossils collected worldwide will be on exhibit. Exhibits only. No dealers. Hours: Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. For information, contact William Usrey, 6628 Salida Way, North Highlands, CA 95660 or call (916) 332-7017.

**Sept. 19-20:** A show by the San Diego Bromeliad Society will be held at Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego, CA. Hours: Saturday, noon to 5 p.m. and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Plant sale featured. For information, contact

Carolyn Watts, (714) 462-3116.

**Sept. 26-27:** The Sequoia Gem and Mineral Society is holding their annual show, *Harvest of Gems and Minerals*. Hours: Saturday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The show is being held at the Red Norton Recreation Center, 1120 Roosevelt Ave., Redwood City, CA. For more information, contact Carol Meeds, 3406 Saratoga Dr., San Mateo, CA 94403.

**Sept. 27-Oct. 9:** The colorful and intriguing rock art of the Southwest will be explored by a group led by Ken Hedges, San Diego Museum of Man curator. Register by the end of August. For complete information, call the Museum of Man, (714) 239-2001.

**Oct. 3-4:** The Prospector's Club of Southern California, Inc. is holding its 14th Annual National Prospector & Treasure Hunters Convention. It will be held at Galileo Hill Park in California City, CA, which is approximately 15 miles NE of Mojave. The latest in prospecting and treasure hunting equipment will be displayed and demonstrated. Beautiful displays of coins, gold, relics, etc. will be exhibited in the treasure display competition. The event will also feature prominent speakers, championships, activities for the kids and many more opportunities. A great weekend outing for the entire family. Most displays require advance reservations and the deadline is September 21. For further information, contact Bill Smillie, 10501 Ilona Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90064.

## Illinois

**June 3-Sept. 8:** The Field Museum of Natural History, Roosevelt Road at Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL is featuring an exhibit on the Hopi Indian. This exhibit celebrates America's oldest continuously surviving culture and features large-scale models of Hopi religious ceremonies, hundreds of kachinas and a hall filled with candid photographs by Joseph Mora. Shortly after these photographs were taken, cameras were banned from Hopi public dances. For further information, contact Barbara Lanctot, (312) 322-8859.

## Missouri

**Sept. 9-11:** The second Biennial Convention of the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumnae will be held in Kansas City, MO. It is open to all enrollees, military officers in charge, forestry personnel who supervised the work programs and office workers in district offices who worked during the years of 1933 to 1942. For information on how to join and convention attendance, write to R. Wallace Reynolds, Exec. Director NACCCA, 7900 Sudley Rd., Suite 418, Manassas, VA 22110.

## Nevada

**Labor Day Week:** Go to Virginia City, NV for camel races. Ten or more camels compete each Labor Day Week and reaffirm their reputation as the least lovable animal in the world. Call (702) 847-0311 for exact information, as dates may vary. Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Sept. 9-13:** Help Nevada celebrate its 50 year anniversary of gaming at the Nevada State Fair in Reno. It will be a "good old days" celebration with traditional home-making and livestock exhibits and judging; cookie bake-off; arm wrestling; frisbee and talent contests; home-arts demonstrations; Country Western entertainment and a special exhibit honoring this anniversary.

**Ongoing:** Get a good introduction to the desert environment at the University of Las Vegas Museum of Natural History. Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Many exhibits on the biology and geology of the area.

## New Mexico

**Sept. 5-6:** In Hatch, NM, join the 10th Annual Hatch Chile Festival. A chile lover's delight; ristras, sacks and baskets of peppers for sale. Features include a skeet shoot, black powder shoot, horse-

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shoe competition, fiddlers' contest, art show, dances, Mexican dinner and chile dish contest. Hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Hatch Airport. For further information, contact the International Connoisseurs of Green & Red Chile, P.O. Box 3467, Las Cruces, NM 88003.

**Sept. 11-13:** 269th Annual Fiesta de Santa Fe. This is the oldest community celebration in the country, commemorating the resettlement of New Mexico by General Don Diego de Vargas. Festivities include parades, arts, crafts, street singing and dancing and food booths. For information, contact the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce, (505) 983-7317.

**Sept. 25-30:** Annual Aspencade in Red River, New Mexico. More than 50 four-wheel-drive vehicles compete in the Aspen Run Rally. Festivities include a big chairlift for hikers, Aspen Square Dance Jamboree & Harvest Moon Hoedown, weekends at the community center. There will also be an arts & crafts street fair, turtle races and mountain man rendezvous. For more information, call the Red River Chamber of Commerce, (505) 754-2366.

## Utah

**Sept. 5-6:** The Moab Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a four-wheel-drive overnight campout. This will take place on several trails leading out of Moab. Campers should bring their own food and supplies. Chamber will provide guides. No charge. For more information, call Donna Jordan, (801) 259-7531.

*The Desert Calendar is a service for our readers. We want to let them know what is happening on the desert. If you are having an event, or even a year-round activity, that you think they would like to hear about, let us know. There is no charge for items listed in the Calendar. We only ask that you submit it to us at least two months prior to the event. We (and our readers) want to hear from you.*

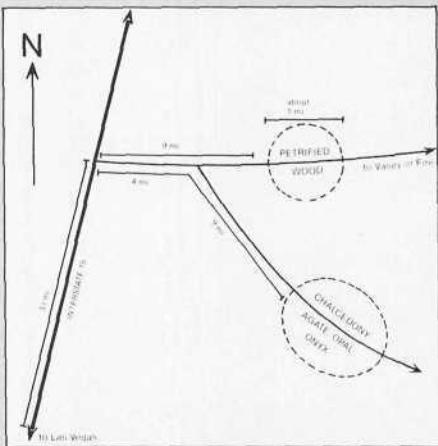
# THE DESERT ROCKHOUND

by Rick Mitchell

## Collecting Sites

The area around Las Vegas is well-known to prospectors and rockhounds. There are agate, jasper, opal, turquoise, onyx and countless other minerals available within a 50-mile radius of town. One of my favorite locations is less than an hour's drive from Las Vegas and offers chalcedony, agate, onyx, common opal in shades of pink, red and orange and petrified wood.

To get to this prime collecting site, take Interstate 15 north from Las Vegas to the turnoff to Valley of Fire State Park (33 miles). Go another four miles. You'll see a dirt road heading to the right. Take it, and continue nine miles to the collecting area. Chalcedony can be found all over, for quite a distance. One can pick up beautiful black, white and brown onyx there, as well as some small but well-colored pieces of carnelian.



Chalcedony, agate, onyx, opal and petrified wood collecting site, north of Las Vegas.

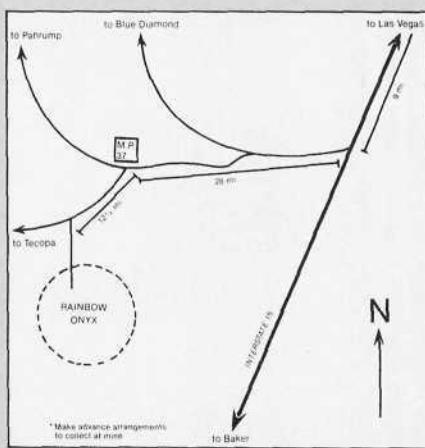
Look also for banded agate and, of course, the prize opal. The latter material is usually found in association with the gray limestone. It is not so plentiful as the other materials, but is quite a bonus.

Be sure to return to the main road and continue to Valley of Fire State Park. This unique geological wonderland features huge masses of red sandstone that have been carved into fascinating shapes by the forces of nature. Don't forget your camera. On the way to the

park, petrified wood can be found about nine miles from the highway and continuing one more mile. Be sure to stop a few times within this mileage to look for some.

South of Las Vegas is one of my favorite places to collect onyx. This spectacular material contains every color of the rainbow, hence the name rainbow onyx. The patterns are as varied as the colors. There are bands, zigzags, lace designs, whorls and even some with dendrites and tiny circles. It is hard. Some cut and look more like agate than onyx. The lapidary craftsman can make everything from stunning cabochons to bookends and clock faces from this showy stone.

To get there, take Interstate 15 south from Las Vegas approximately nine miles to the turnoff to Pahrump. Follow this road, bearing to the left at the intersection, 28 miles. Just past Milepost 37, take the left turn to Tecopa. Continue another 12 1/2 miles, turn left and proceed to the mine.

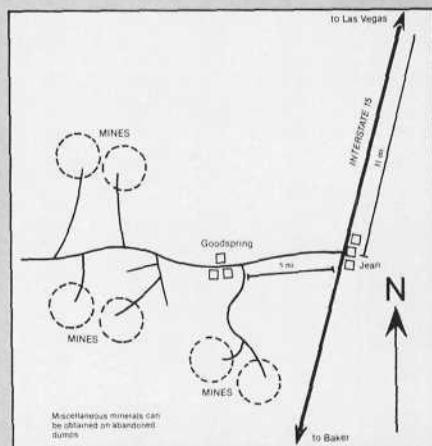


Outstanding site for collecting rainbow onyx, southwest of Las Vegas.

If you want to collect this rainbow onyx, write to the owner of the property, Rusty Springer, at 6524 Bourbon Way, Las Vegas, Nevada 89107. He prefers groups and clubs, since it is not worth his time to drive out to the claim for just one or two people. There is a nominal charge, 50 cents a pound, which is almost

nothing when you consider the quality. If you don't make advance arrangements, you will be turned back by the guard. This is an outstanding collecting spot, but not recommended for the summer due to intense heat.

The mine dumps southwest of Las Vegas offer the collector a wide variety of mineral specimens. If you are interested in minerals, take Interstate 15 south from Las Vegas to Jean, about 31 miles. Proceed another five miles toward Goodsprings and you'll start seeing a number of roads heading in all directions. As you continue on the main road, take any of them. Chances are, you'll end up at a mine.



Mine dumps, southwest of Las Vegas, for collecting mineral specimens.

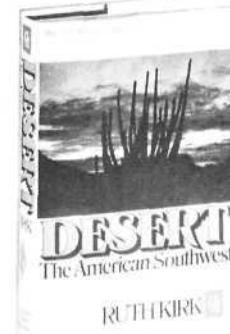
Often found on the dumps are wulfenite, galena, calamine, smithsonite, malachite, chrysocolla, chalcopyrite, tenorite, spalerite and cerussite. The contents of the dumps vary from mine to mine. Be very careful, though, not to venture into any of the shafts, and make sure that it is abandoned. The status of these mines changes frequently, but collecting information can usually be obtained by inquiring in Jean or Goodsprings. The extra time needed to ascertain collecting status is well-rewarded with excellent mineral specimens, worthy of any collection.

## New Equipment

Ultra Tec has a new accessory for the head of its faceting machine. It is a Dial

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RUTH KIRK

Indicator Attachment, which provides a large dial readout, indicating the angular position of the spindle relative to the lap. No modification of the head is necessary and it can be attached in less than a minute. This device adapts to Ultra Tec faceting heads only. For more information, contact Ultra Tec at 1025 E. Chestnut, Santa Ana, California 92701.

Garrett Electronics is marketing a new Pocket Scanner. I have tested one and am very excited about its potential for quick analysis of mine dumps for metallic content as well as traditional metal detector applications. It is simple to use and very compact. This tiny device measures only 6 1/2" x 3" x 1 1/2", making it easy to carry, even when hiking quite a distance. For more information, contact Garrett at 2814 National Drive, Garland, Texas 75041.

The Crystalite Corporation, 13449 Beach Avenue, Marina Del Rey, California 90291, now produces a diamond clock face drill with a 7/16" diameter. It features a new cutting surface that is said to be very effective, giving the drill longer life and allowing it to cut faster than conventional counterparts.

The Perfectone Company is now manufacturing 60 different animal molds that can be used to produce wax patterns for jewelry. Each is self-lubricating and flexible. The wax pops out when ready. For more information, contact Perfectone at 5546 West Oakland Park Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33313.

Foredom Electric Company recently introduced its newest miniature tool, the Series RM. It features a flexible shaft, electronic feedback control, precise dial speed control and on-off indicator light. There are 13 interchangeable handpieces and hundreds of miniature accessories that can be used with this new tool. For more information, write Foredom Electric Company, Route 6, Bethel, Connecticut 06801.

## Books

The fifth edition of Carol Kindler's book, *Dig It*, is now available. This edition has been completely revised and discusses 253 fee-collecting locations of interest to

the rockhound. The sites are arranged by states, towns and mines, each in alphabetical order. Important information such as fees, hours of operation, address and/or telephone number and what can be collected is included. This is a handy book for those willing to pay a fee to collect. Send \$4.95 to Kindler, P.O. Box 12328, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19119.

The 1978-79 edition of *Minerals Yearbook, Volume I: Metals and Minerals*, can be purchased for \$15 from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 20402. Your order should specify the title as well as the stock number, which is 024-004-02021-1. The publication contains 1,063 pages, and is primarily of interest to those involved in mining, but is also informative to advanced rockhounds. There is a chapter on new developments and government policies, as well as 72 chapters on nonfuel minerals. Each mineral is discussed with regard to its domestic production, price, consumption and new technology to obtain and process it.

## Newsletters

A new newsletter dedicated to fossil hunters is being distributed, free of charge except for postage, to all who are interested in that hobby. *Fossil Report* is a monthly newsletter of four to six pages. It covers collecting, presentation tips, personalities and other related news items. If you would like to examine a sample copy, send a first class stamp to *Fossil Report*, P.O. Box 1600, Alamogordo, New Mexico 88310.

One of the best publications for those interested in keeping up with the world of precious colored stones is the *Colored Gem Digest*. This quarterly magazine features articles written by dealers, gemologists and other experts in the field. Of interest to those involved in buying and selling gems is the colored stone price index. Subscriptions are available at \$20 per year, or single issues may be purchased at \$5 each. Orders should be sent to Ge-Odyssey Gem Publications, 3532 Katella, No. 210, Los Alamitos, California 90720. □

**Roadmap to California's Lost Mines and Buried Treasures** Comp. by Varna Ent. Two sides, Northern/Southern Calif. Size is 38" x 25". Scaled. Detailed locations of place names not on other maps. \$5

**Western Nevada Jeep Trails** Roger Mitchell. Many 4WD trails never in print before — takes in Bullionville, Carson City loop, Jack's Spring Canyon, Candelaria, Lida Wash. \$1.25

**The Baja Book II** Tom Miller/Elmar Baxter. Highly recommended. Includes 50 mile-by-mile road maps + NASA Baja Spacemaps. Detailed with over 100 illus. Pb. \$8.95

**American Indian Food and Lore** Carolyn Neithammer. Plants Indians used for foods, medicinal purposes, shelter, clothing, etc. Large format, 191 pgs, many illus. \$5.95

**Chili Lovers' Cookbook** Al & Mildred Fischer. Two cookbooks in one. The best of chili cookery and a variety of taste-tempting foods made from/with chili peppers. Pb. \$3

**Lost Legends of the Silver State** Gerald B. Higgs. 16 legends of the golden age of Nevada, with rare old photos. Pb. \$7.95

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## How to order:

1. Circle the books above that you want.
2. Add up the prices, add sales tax of 6% if you're a Californian, and \$1.50 for shipping and handling cost.
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# THE TRADING POST

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WESTERN Americana Books. Used, out-of-print & rare. Write for catalog. Mitchell's Book Shop, 17 Washington St., Santa Clara, CA 95050.

FOR SALE: 45 *Desert* magazines—odd issues from 1941 to 1966. Make offer. 520 Toyopa Dr., Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

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HOW TO WIN Recipe and Cooking Contests. \$3.95. Griffith Book Co., P.O. Box 2197, Chula Vista, CA 92012.

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THE TACHE-YOKUTS, Indians of the San Joaquin Valley, their lives, songs, and stories. 2nd ed. 1979. Printed. PB \$8.50, HB \$12.95 plus tax. Shipping \$1. Cassette tape of 1940 Tache songs, \$5. Marjorie W. Cummins, 2064 Carter Way, Hanford, CA 93230. Quantity discounts available.

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## WESTERN ART

NAVAJO STERLING spiderweb pendant, 1-3/4 inches diameter, 18-inch chain. Photo. Pre-Christmas sale, \$29.95. The Blue Wind, Box 13, Golden, CO 80401.

# OUR DESERT HERITAGE



DESERT MAGAZINE ARCHIVES

Reno, Nevada's first official band.



DESERT MAGAZINE ARCHIVES

Junior Hose Company #1, Reno, Nevada.

Desert magazine is famous for showing you the places in the American Southwest. We give you beautiful expanses of earth and sky, mountain and canyon, river and mesa. The land is so overpowering that it is easy to miss the faces. With this in mind, we culled a couple of photos from our archives to give you some of those faces: those who were in this land long before us, who made life a little easier, a little more hospitable for those of us who follow.

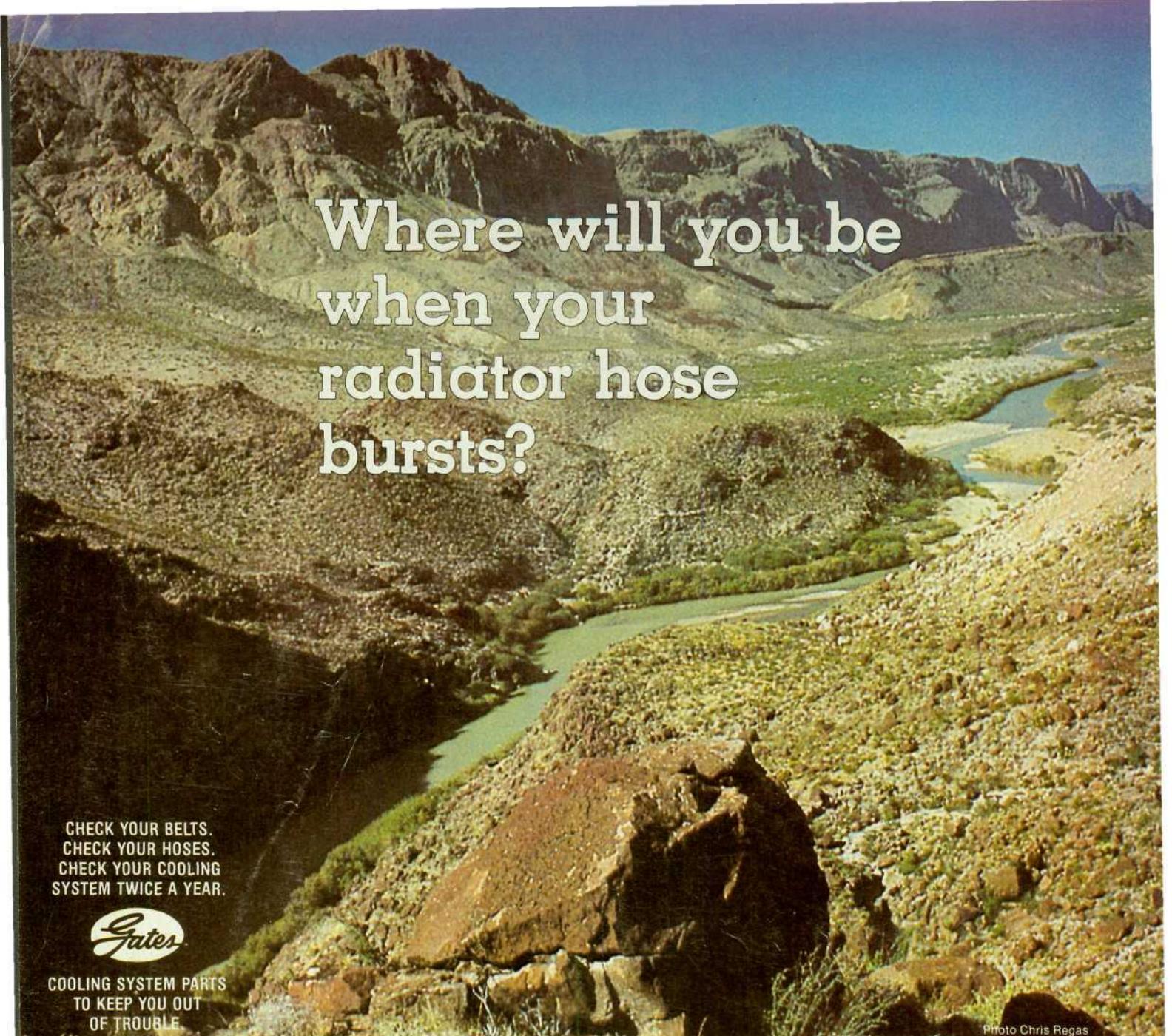
Here are the faces of 20 young men, taken circa 1880. Is this what you imagine when thinking of those days? Some are stylish with beards and mustaches, some are baby-faced. All are dressed for their roles in frontier society. Whether in the service of putting out fires or firing up the dance hall, they all contributed to what we would finally enjoy.

It is not hard to see ourselves in these photos, to wonder how well we will age, how well we will have served.

The music is gone, the fires are out, but the faces remain. It is to them that we pay tribute.



*Afternoon at Cathedral Gorge in the Cathedral Gorge State Park, Nevada. Photo by Jeff Gnass.*



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Photo Chris Regas



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